

# STATISM

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THE ROOTS AND FEATURES OF A DYING  
IDEOLOGY

GIAN PIERO DE BELLIS



Statism (2023)

Polyarchy - Panarchy - Statism - State - Territorialism - Aterritorialism - Autonomy -  
Voluntary Communities - Future

Web Sites:

- [www.polyarchy.org](http://www.polyarchy.org)

- [www.panarchy.org](http://www.panarchy.org)

- [www.wwwwisdom.net](http://www.wwwwisdom.net)

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## PRESENTATION

The supposed problems

The real problems

From problems to solutions



### The supposed problems

The current political and social debate focuses on topics that have been with us for almost two centuries and have been argued about and dealt with in the same stereotypical way throughout the 20th century.

As far as social thinking is concerned, we seem to be running around in circles, repeating the all too familiar arguments, hardly ever questioning the soundness of the beliefs on which we build our theories and base our decisions/actions. No wonder that progress in the social sciences has been so poor, especially if we make a comparison with the revolutionary ideas and discoveries that have emerged in the physical sciences and related applications in many technological fields.

For this reason, given the lack of any true advancement in the domain of human studies (especially, politics, sociology and economics), we should perhaps question:

- if we are sincerely focusing on real, substantial themes/problems or on imaginary/invented ones.
- if the way we approach these themes/problems is a creative and sound one, leading to effective theoretical and practical results.

### **The real problems**

The problems most debated refer to the following pairs of opposites:

- Globalism / Antiglobalism
- Capitalism / Anticapitalism
- Liberalism / Antiliberalism
- Socialism / Antisocialism
- Anarchism / Antianarchism
- Terrorism / Antiterrorism
- Churchism / Statism

The core argument of the following essays is that the real themes to be tackled are hidden behind these made-up pairs.

Furthermore, within these made-up pairs, we might discover that a conflict is implicitly assumed between personal freedom on the one side and social equality, public welfare and collective security on the other.

What some, even well intentioned, participants in the debate maintain is that, in order to achieve social equality, public welfare and collective security, it is necessary that we give up some (or a lot) of personal freedom to some appointed figures within certain recognized organizations.

This is the gist of the matter and the real core of the problem.

However, the main thesis that will be advanced here is that what many fail, in different ways, to grasp is the fact that:

- there is no opposition between freedom and equality, since



equality in the enjoyment of freedom is the most important source and form of equality.

- personal freedom is social welfare or, rather, freedom is the essential source/component of personal well-being, and the well-being of each individual is the necessary condition for the well-being of all.

- the only way to ensure security is not to destroy personal freedom because, as has already been seen in the past, if we destroy personal freedom the security of everybody, with the (temporary) exception of the ruling élites, is seriously compromised.

### **From problems to solutions**

It is a common saying amongst creative people, that the most demanding task in the process of looking for a solution is to find (define, depict, dissect, etc.) the problem. Only if this stage has been satisfactorily carried out, can we start designing a solution.

Otherwise, we are just deceiving ourselves and frustrating all possible efforts towards a positive outcome.

That is why social problems seem insoluble or so difficult to solve compared with technological problems. It is not because the latter are simple and present self-evident answers; it is because, in their case, the scientists have successfully focused on the real questions. On the other hand, in the field of social problems, politicians, social scientists and laymen have superimposed on real problems many fantastic fabrications so that, in the end, fictitious scenarios are put in the place of actual realities.

This is, at least, what will be put forward in the essays here presented. The focus is on:

- Globalism
- Capitalism
- Liberalism
- Socialism
- Anarchism

- Terrorism
- Statism

The main aim is to:

- analyze the historical background of these themes,
- ascertain how relevant, in content and form, is the current debate on them,
- advance the thesis that the way these themes are presented and debated serves (consciously or unconsciously) to conceal more pertinent, pressing and potentially disturbing problems.

What should emerge, at the end, is an unconventional (and so highly debatable) outlook aiming at inspiring unconventional (and so highly diversified) solutions, far from the uniformity and conventionality of present day thinking and acting.

## GLOBALISM / ANTIGLOBALISM

Globalization: a new fad  
The decline of globalism  
The end of globalism  
The resumption of globalism  
Anti-globalization: a new fad  
Anti-globalization: attitudes and arguments  
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The myths of the movement  
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### Globalization: a new fad

If somebody living in England around the middle of the 19th century, when the *Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations* opened in London under the Crystal Palace (1851) and when Marx and Engels were busy writing their *Manifesto* (1848), celebrating the irresistible rise of the bourgeoisie, the continuous expansion of industry and the development of world exchanges, if that person were to come back to life now, at the beginning of the 21st century, and, sitting in a library, browsing through recent books and magazines and newspapers, tried to acquire some information about the present state of the world's societies, it is most likely that he/she would be struck by how little humanity has progressed (or how much it has regressed) in many aspects of social life.

The world that person left behind was a world (seemingly) on the march towards increasing

- Political liberalism
- Economic internationalism
- Cultural cosmopolitanism

To give a glimpse of how the world (or at least the most advanced country) was, right till the beginning of the 20th century, it is worth reading the description of life in England with which A. J. P. Taylor starts his *English History*:

"Until August 1914 a sensible, law-abiding Englishman could pass through life and hardly notice the existence of the state, beyond the post office and the policeman. He could live where he liked and as he liked. He had no official number or identity card. He could travel abroad or leave his country for ever without a passport or any sort of official permission. He could exchange his money for any other currency without restriction or limit. He could buy goods from any other country in the world on the same terms as he bought goods at home. For that matter, a foreigner could spend his life in this

country without permit and without informing the police." [1965, A. J. P. Taylor]

All this changed with the outbreak of the First World War. What resulted was the emergence of another world, characterized mainly by the following aspects:

- Political totalitarianism: people recognized and accepted the power of the state to intervene in any area of social life. The forms by which this power was attributed were the totalitarian electoral democracy (the ruler is elected), the totalitarian plebiscitary democracy (the ruler is hailed), or a mixture of the two.
- Economic protectionism: people recognized and accepted the territorial power of the state to put restrictions on the freedom of exchange, making the interests of the consumers (i.e. everybody) subservient to the interests of the national producers (employers and employees).
- Cultural nationalism: people recognized and accepted the existence of distinct homogeneous national cultures and saw in the state the defender and protector of these so called national identities.

The political and economic changes that followed the outbreak of the war had the effect of transforming the world into a less free and less safe place, where rivalries was the new name for relations. Furthermore, such changes succeeded in obliterating any memory of the past, making people believe that the new phenomena, for instance the (presumed) existence of national identities or the introduction of identification documents, were indispensable pre-existing realities, natural as the air we breathe.

This obliteration of our past has gone so deep and so far that, towards the end of the 20th century, fad-promoting intellectuals and fad-following journalists have been busy writing books and articles, giving speeches and seminars about what they have

presented as a brand new phenomenon, globalism, or, as they call it, globalization.

The absurd fuss or excitement about a novelty that is not new should make everybody aware that, actually, we live in an upside down world, in which freedom (of movement, of settlement, of exchange) is a phenomenon that gets scrutinized and debated, while restrictions of all sorts are facts accepted and taken for granted.

It is then necessary to examine how and why all this came to be, in other words how and why an outlook and a praxis based on globalism (liberalism, internationalism, cosmopolitanism) were replaced by ideologies and practices vehemently opposed to it. This is the real problem.

### **The decline of globalism**

The spread of intellectual enlightenment and industrial activity that characterized most of the 18th and 19th centuries came to a halt at the beginning of the 20th century.

By that time, the formation of nation states throughout Europe, with the exception of the federation of nationalities that constituted the Austro-Hungarian Empire, had been achieved.

At a certain point, nationalism (aspirations to self-government) and capitalism (industrial productive attitudes) became associated with or obliterated by the state and ceased to be forces of liberation and progress.

One of the most important characteristics of the years right before the end of the 19th century was the continuous and significant growth of the state budget and of state expenditure.

In 1890 the United Kingdom had a population 37.5 million inhabitants and state spending amounted to less than 80 million pounds. In 1901, with a population of 41.5 million inhabitants (an increase of slightly over 10%), state expenditure had reached almost 178 million pounds (an increase of over 122%). [1902, John Hobson]

The growth of the role of the state is associated (as cause and

effect) with the predominance of the following interconnected phenomena:

- Protectionism. The protectionist policies that had been abandoned or relaxed by the states came back into fashion once the international competition was felt to be too challenging to many national producers. Inefficient firms with obsolete processes of production demanded and received protection from a nation state who wanted to play a bigger role, everywhere, even in a country with liberal institutions like England. National protectionism was the path leading to the formation of national cartels or monopolies.

- Monopolism. Under the protection of state tariffs either a group of firms was able to take control of the internal market or the biggest firm could grow to the point of monopolizing it. Besides that, the central state granted to itself monopolistic power of running collective services (transport, electricity, etc.) or conceded to a national firm exclusive rights of exploitation and administration in a particular field. A further push towards monopolism was achieved when the state, becoming an ever-bigger economic entity in itself, assigned to already large firms contracts for the production of all sorts of goods, increasing their size and reinforcing their dominance of a sector of production. All these facts extended the area of monopolies and monopolistic practices.

- Financialism. Monopolies drain resources in excess of what would be a healthy competitive situation, leading to the accumulation of vast fortunes. The capitalist entrepreneur either became or gave way to the financial rentier. Banks and financial institutions, under the supervision of the state central bank, increasingly took the central role in the economy. The rentier found at his disposal enormous sums of money; one of the surest ways to invest this money was to finance the state debt. For this reason the financier was in favour of the expansion of the role of the state, everywhere in the world; it meant opportunities to invest his money in state bonds.

- Militarism. One of the quickest ways of increasing the state budget was to push for military expenditure. This was what the financiers did (through the jingoist press) and what the military

circles of the state were, in any case, keen to do. At the turn of the 19th century the nation states were fast becoming machines for war. Of the 178 million pounds spent by the English state in 1901, almost 80% was for military and naval expenses and for repaying the national debt [1902, John Hobson]. The states of Germany, France, Italy were not behind England in the arms race and every increase in spending on armaments in one state provided motivation and justifications for the other states to follow suit.

- Imperialism. The result of all these new phenomena was imperialism. Imperialism is not at all the outcome of an industrial capitalism looking for new export markets. As Hobson made very clear a long time ago [1902, John Hobson], the role of Africa or Asia as absorbing markets was practically insignificant during the age of imperialism and even later. The main bulk of trade was and still is between industrial countries, with a population enjoying a high level of income (and so purchasing power) through the production of goods and services that are exchanged for other goods and services. To understand imperialism we would do better to think of it as a political affair (to gain prestige and power for the state élite), a financial affair (to guarantee the repayment of loans and monetary charges to the financial élite) and an employment affair (to provide occupation in the military, bureaucratic or foreign service to the sons of the political élite and its subordinate associates).

These five phenomena (protectionism, monopolism, financialism, militarism, imperialism), reinforcing each other, succeeded in stopping and reversing the course towards globalism. At the same time, they represent the many facets of a new system coming to general dominance, in stark opposition to liberalism, internationalism, cosmopolitanism: **statism**.

### **The end of globalism: the long escape from freedom and dignity**

The outbreak of the First World War marks the end of globalism and the worldwide emergence of statism on a national basis.

The war brings to the fore all the germs incubated under protec-



tionism, monopolism, financialism, militarism, imperialism. These factors have, by then, become the accepted ideological pillars in the practical armoury of statism.

They are pushed even further by the new movements that arise from the material and moral ravages of the war. These political movements peddle the promise of a total regeneration of society; what they really mean by this is that the state, identified with society, takes full control of the individuals.

The era of statism is the time of the individual incorporated into the masses and subjugated under the state. Liberalism, internationalism and cosmopolitanism are, then, completely obliterated.

The ideologies and movements through which statism, more systematically, dominated the first half of the 20th century are:

- Communism. The communist movement that took power in Russia in 1917 would, in the course of time, bring to perfection the factors listed above, and especially those of monopolism (everything is run by the state) and imperialism (ethnic groups are displaced, weakened, annihilated). The siege mentality (long after the reasons that justified it had disappeared) and the theorization of "socialism in one country" are the most evident signs of the distaste for internationalism and cosmopolitanism that were, by contrast, the hallmarks of the 19th century communist thinkers, encapsulated in the words that end the communist manifesto: Proletarians of all countries unite!

- Fascism. The ideology of fascism, as well as its leader Mussolini, are both a clear derivation from socialism. A socialism in which internationalism and individual emancipation have been thrown out of the window and replaced by nationalism and state control. This resulted in autocracy (state dirigism) and autarchy (state protectionism) with the extirpation of everything that could smell of liberalism and cosmopolitanism. In Italy, under Fascism, "alien" ethnic groups living within the territory controlled by the Italian state were either forcibly assimilated or invited to pack and leave (e.g. the German-speaking population in South-Tyrol). Even the language was subject to a purifying process, in the attempt to expel "foreign" words. All so idiotic and all so tragic.

- National Socialism. The ideology and movement that, even in its name, reflects best the spirit of the age is National Socialism. Here we have a totally closed society where the purity of the race is paramount and the mixing of individuals belonging to the world community had to be, not only avoided, but, in some cases, forbidden and punished. The total rejection of internationalism and cosmopolitanism by National Socialism appears clearly in its attempt at world domination, where everything is reduced to the relationship between a master (the superior race) and its servants (the inferior races). It is the apotheosis of militarism and imperialism within a protected and totally regulated political and economic space.

What characterizes these three movements is the fact that they brought to full realization the tendencies and attitudes of their epoch, namely:

- an anti-liberal stance (against individualism)
- an anti-capitalistic stance (against internationalism)
- an anti-humanistic stance (against cosmopolitanism)

Those movements represent an escape from freedom and dignity in search of protection and security. They all advocate a closed society under the control and direction of the state. They have actually been the total destroyers of any seed of globalism that had started germinating in the previous century.

### **The resumption of globalism: the slow recovery of freedom and dignity**

At the end of the long period of European Civil Wars (1914-1945), the fall of Fascism and National Socialism marked the end, in Western Europe, of the experience of the totally dictatorial states.

With the collapse of extreme statism, the human being of post-war Europe was free, at least in the Western part, from the suffocating embrace of the state; nevertheless, he was still led by the hand by more or less well-intentioned statesmen and politicians.

In fact, the post-war years have been the time of continuous expansion of the welfare state with its apparatus of social security provisions.

It has also been the time of state national planning with the aim of directing the energy of a country towards national social and economic progress.

These were all good and honourable propositions. It can be acknowledged that even the dictatorial regimes, as far as internal matters are concerned, had produced and implemented some worthy and commendable measures.

At the same time, it needs to be stressed that there is something basically and intrinsically unhealthy in all this and it is the fact that any intervention from a bureaucratic institution breeds, almost inevitably, irresponsibility and incompetence in all who are involved in it: those who receive because they are led to believe that it is their legitimate right to get something for nothing, and in the course of time, become unable to achieve anything by themselves; those who distribute the resources because they are likely to become sloppy and careless in administering the funds as not originating, directly or principally, from them.

All bureaucratic institutions seem to be based on irresponsibility and distaste for accountability. The state being the bureaucratic institution par excellence, it is there that we find irresponsible acts and lack of accountability at its highest level. But no institution can survive forever on such shaky grounds.

So, two hundred years after the French Revolution (1789) started the process of enthroning the state with all its features and fixtures (democracy by representatives, decision by majority vote, administration by bureaucracy), the state has experienced a series of earthquakes, the most violent taking place there where it was most oppressive and invasive. The Fall of the Berlin Wall (prelude to the collapse of the Soviet Empire) and the demonstrations in Tien-an-men Square in Beijing (1989) have been only the most evident signs of a change of attitudes towards the state and state control.

All the pillars of statism, some already reduced in size and

strength, have been brought into question or shaken by new realities. Let us highlight only a few points.

- Protectionism. The post-war world has seen the implementation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) with the aim of reducing tariffs and freeing commerce from the most absurd restrictions. This has been partly responsible for the post-war recovery and expansion of Western economies. In 1995 the GATT became the WTO (World Trade Organization) with the mission of reducing even further the obstacles to the freedom of commerce. Trading with each other (instead of treading on each other) is seen, once again, as in Richard Cobden's times, as the best way to promote peace and development.

- Monopolism. With the lowering of barriers, monopolism is under threat as big firms lose their national fiefs. Moreover and at the same time, new technological tools (e.g. Internet) give to every individual the power to communicate with the entire world and to build virtual communities not bound by any territorial (i.e. state) reality. As for the economy, these tools allow for a better working of competition, offering plenty of information to isolated consumers in their dealing with producers who are still powerful, but not so powerful as before.

- Financialism. The 20th century has been characterized by almost constant inflation (sometimes hyperinflation) mainly due to the subordination of monetary policy to the interest of the state élite. As a matter of fact, the country with the strongest currency (the Deutsche Mark) in the post war period was also the one with a Central Bank independent of political manoeuvring. With the decline of protectionism and monopolism, inflation is not any longer a viable proposition to solve the problems of political mismanagement of the economy. Throughout Europe, the Central Banks (presently the European Central Bank) got out from under the protective (i.e. manipulative) wings of the state in order to focus only on administering the currency. The time of financial rentiers shielded by political cliques might be almost over.

- Militarism. The collapse of the communist system and the disappearance of the Soviet Union have brought to an end the historical

chapter known as the cold war. This has taken away most of the justifications for expenditure on armaments and for the continuous build-up of weapons that has been the general practice of almost every state on earth. It does not mean that militarism is over but only that it is not any longer silently and implicitly accepted as in the past. Moreover, military spending is a burden that, if carried on a large scale and for a long period, might undermine any state, as the experience of the Soviet Union has shown.

- Imperialism. Asia and Africa, the old battlegrounds of imperialism, have changed (Asia) and are changing (Africa). They have entered or are entering more and more the scene of world trade after having been kept or remained on the margins for so long (especially Africa). The dictators that found protection in some superpower (USA, USSR) or western state (France, United Kingdom) have lost their godfathers and they are not so able, on their own, to oppress people as they used to do for decades.

So, one after the other, the old evil forces of protectionism, monopolism, financialism, militarism, imperialism, all orchestrated under the direction of the state and operating under the surface throughout the period of the cold war, were/are losing power because the state is on the retreat and the individual affirming his freedom to move and trade and communicate all over the world is on the rise.

It should not then come as a surprise that, at this precise moment in history, when many favourable factors have converged for a possible overcoming of statism, the old scourges of anti-liberalism, anti-internationalism and anti-cosmopolitanism reappear on the scene. This time their banner is, at least, clear and unequivocal: anti-globalization.

### **Anti-globalization: a new fad**

Anti-globalization is a new (in the sense of recently appeared) political fad but it is not a new phenomenon.

In the course of history cosmopolitanism has alternated or cohabited with insularity, provincialism and chauvinism.

Alongside individuals like Leibniz, Voltaire, Kant who were corresponding and exchanging ideas with people all over Europe and travelling extensively, with the mind and/or the body, there were many others who had their mind closed and body confined in a very narrow space and could not think of the inhabitants of the next village without a feeling of uneasiness or even fright.

On the whole, cosmopolitanism is more an attitude of opening the mind than the result of moving the feet and changing place, even if travelling does help in enlarging views. Kant, for instance, never left Königsberg but he was a true cosmopolitan. Hegel, on the other hand, who had a less sedentary life, could be seen, to a certain extent, as the epitome of the nationalistic narrow-minded person, celebrating with bombastic words the glory of his Prussian State. In ancient times Epictetus expressed the idea of the human being as world citizen; this cosmopolitan attitude, fusing and transcending both localism and globalism, was encapsulated by Johann Wolfgang Goethe in the statement: "I am a citizen of Weimar, I am a citizen of the world."

Against these modern cosmopolitan attitudes and tendencies originating in the 17th and 18th centuries' Enlightenment, the nationalistic movements that emerged in the course of the 19th century began a long struggle that was highly successful; in fact, it led to the dominance, everywhere, of national states and national cultures.

The current antiglobalist attitudes are historically linked to that source of nationalism and statism. In other words, the main aspects that characterize the present anti-globalization movement represent the core points of the nationalistic and statist vision and rely on the anti-cosmopolitan tendencies of the past.

Those tendencies favoured the introduction, by the ruling élites of the nation states, of certain obstacles that were necessary for setting up and reinforcing their control of the territory and of the people they had taken over. The impediments affected the:

- Movement of individuals. The main obstructions to the free movement of people were the invention of the passport and the introduction of state laws putting conditions on international travelling [2000, John Torpey]. Passports were issued to check movement of individ-

uals even inside the state (internal passports). As for entering another state territory, let us focus on one country reputed as amongst the most open in the world, the USA. Already in 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act had prohibited the entry of Chinese workers for ten years. In 1904 the exclusion became permanent and in 1907 it was extended to Japanese and then to Korean citizens. In 1917 the literacy test was introduced in order to restrict immigration by excluding those with no reading and writing skills. Finally, in 1921, the Quota Act fixed a maximum number of entrants in the country (357,000 individuals per year), a figure that was halved in the second Quota act of 1924.

- *Passage of goods.* In the USA, a series of Tariff Acts (the McKinley Tariff, 1890; the Dingley Tariff, 1897; the Fordney-McCumber Tariff, 1922; the Hawley-Smoot Tariff, 1930) had been preceded by Tariff Laws in various European states (Austria 1874-1875 and later 1881 and 1887; Russia 1877; Spain, 1877 and 1891; Germany, 1879; France, 1881 and 1892; Italy, 1887; Sweden, 1888). The imposition of tariffs, restricting the drive towards technical innovation and business opportunities, was actually damaging the economic situation of everybody in general. Failure to acknowledge this was conducive to the political and economic attitude in favour of autarchy that would dominate the first half of the 20th century and that would be responsible above all for the long depression.

- *Circulation of ideas.* The obstacles to the movement of individuals and the passage of goods due to the strengthening of state national borders and controls had also a negative effect on the circulation of ideas. If we consider how large, after the Second World War, was the contribution of immigrants to the revival of the sciences in the USA (physics, mathematics, architecture, psychology, sociology, etc.), we realize how negatively state controls on free circulation affect the realm of ideas (creation, diffusion). Besides that, state control of the means of communication and the efforts bestowed by the state on the formation of a national identity have not been, for sure, factors facilitating the free circulation and cross-fertilization of ideas coming from the outside.

It is therefore appropriate to say that the general climate

promoting and hardening anti-globalist feelings was one based on the refusal of freedom and on the lack of acknowledgment of the dignity of every human being.

### **Anti-globalization: attitudes and arguments**

The current attitudes and arguments of the anti-globalization movement resemble and repeat many aspects of the past.

At the same time, it is necessary to point out that the movement is made up of so many strings of thought and themes of intervention that what applies to one group might be anathema to another. So, more than an integrated and well-developed set of ideas and positions what appears is a series of not clearly defined feelings and choices, all present at the same time within the movement.

Nevertheless, all those who accept the "anti-globalization" label must be consistent enough to recognize that they share mental attitudes that oppose one or all of the following three manifestations of freedom. In other words, they are:

- **Against freedom of movement** (national segregationism: individuals)

Anti-globalization people oppose the freedom of movement not regulated (i.e. not highly restricted) by the state. According to them the state must have total sovereignty over its territory and can decide who should have access to that territory. In this vision the world is seen as made of national clubs or, better, national caged boxes, where admission (and even exit) is regulated by a ruling body.

The justifications put forward for this national segregationism are:

- personal security: the so-called "foreigners" are often seen, mainly (it must be stressed) by uncultivated people, as a menace to safety. For this reason, in the course of history, "foreigners" have often been the target of fear and the scapegoat for irrational bursts of rage. There is nothing surprising about this and it will probably be like that until we stop calling some human beings, "foreigners." or "aliens," like Martians from another planet.



- social security: the so-called "foreigners" are accused of using and abusing the provision of services offered by the welfare state to its subjects; for this reason they are seen as intruders who are appropriating resources that belong to the natives.

- **Against freedom of trade** (national protectionism: goods)

Anti-globalization people oppose the free circulation of goods advocated by what they call the ultra-liberalist wing. The arguments in support of protectionist policies refer, generally and variously, to:

- the loss of jobs in the old industrial regions (mature industries);
- the gaining of jobs in the new industrializing regions (infant industries).

- **Against freedom of expression** (national isolationism: ideas)

Anti-globalization people oppose the free flow of cultural artifacts and "alien" ideas. Certainly no one openly admits to being against the freedom of expression/fruition of world art and culture but this is the indirect result when measures are requested/implemented for

- regulating the access to information and entertainment coming from other cultures (quotas);
- favouring a national art and a national cultural industry (subsidies).

All this in the name of protecting a national cultural identity.

THESE THREE (PARTIAL) negations of freedom (of movement, of trade, of expression) represent attitudes of the anti-globalization movement not always consciously held. The ideological make-up of the movement is so contradictory, varying from the passionate nationalist to the not less passionate internationalist, that some people will not recognize themselves as supporters of one or all of these anti-freedom instances. Some would even profess that they are for the full expansion of freedom and the abolition of every barrier.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that we refer to an entity that calls itself the anti-globalization movement and whoever accepts that name must inevitably accept also all the traps and trappings, that is the mines and meanings attached to that label. Only Humpty

Dumpty can get away with using words to mean what he chooses to mean [1871, Lewis Carroll]. But here there is no Alice and we are not in Wonderland.

### **Anti-globalization: villains and slogans**

The anti-globalization movement has some clearly targeted villains. The main ones are the multinational firms, against which are addressed arguments that have become substantiated in a series of slogan-like statements.

The central points of some of those statements will now be listed in order to be examined more carefully at a later stage.

Many arguments have been part of the anti-capitalistic movement but they have received a new lease of life from the anti-globalization movement.

With regard to the multinationals, the sins or the negative aspects that they are reproached for are, briefly, the fact that these firms:

- aim at the maximization of profits;
- locate where the salaries are lowest;
- employ children and women in their factories;
- destroy the environment through their ways of production;
- obliterate cultural identities;
- are more powerful than many nation states.

A second villain is identified as the International Organizations (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization), which are said to promote policies of free trade and balanced state budget. According to the anti-globalization movement, these very policies

- put an intolerable weight on the shoulders of the poor (increasing debts, pushing for a reduction in social expenditures, etc.);

- widen the gap between rich and poor.

At first sight all these seem awful misdeeds against which we all

have to rally, fighting for their disappearance and for the redress of any wrongs.

However, before jumping to action, we have first to analyze, with a critical mind

- the reasonableness of some charges;
- the evidence in support of some charges.

Only after having done so can we have a clear picture of the reality, not distorted by myths, mystifications, omissions. At the end of this examination we can go back to re-consider the attitudes and arguments of the anti-globalization movement and see if they represent a truthful and sensible portrait of the situation.

### **The myths of the movement**

The anti-globalization movement has built its name and appeal on the invention and diffusion of some myths that are repeated over and over again, are believed by too many people, but nevertheless still remain bloated and blatant distortions of reality. They refer to:

- The existence of the free market. In a world made of states or super states, each one protecting its own turf with tariffs; where the rich countries spend every day 1 billion dollars on agricultural subsidies; where some areas of the world are almost totally excluded from trade because of red tape imposed by these states, where the never ending saga of tariff reduction is intermingled with yet new tariffs (on steel, on shoes, on textiles, on pasta, on cars, etc.), spreading the idea of the existence of an international free market is not just propaganda, it is pure and simple deception (or self-deception). Moreover, to insist on the belief that we live in a free trade world is to perform a cruel hoax on the people in the developing countries, given the fact that duties on processed goods imposed on their economies by the industrialized world are four times higher than on corresponding goods from other industrialized countries [1999, Thomas Hertel and Will Martin].

- The ultra-liberal stances of state power. To use the word liberal (in its original sense of favouring freedom) in relation to the state is, to

put it mildly, a linguistic blunder. The state is a controlling and domineering organization that harbours, mostly, very illiberal tendencies. A certain openness shown recently towards other states derives from the sheer necessity to cope with new technologies and to fend off new desires and new powers on the part of the individuals that threaten its survival. Nevertheless, this should not blind us to the fact that the biggest obstacles to liberalization (freedom of movement, of trade, of expression) have come and are likely to come from the state élites. So, talking of ultra-liberalism with reference to state power is total and utter nonsense. Freedom is advancing despite and against the state.

- The all-powerful international organizations. In spite of the fact that the nation state is in decline, it is still the source of most manifestations of power. International organizations are made up of representatives designated by the nation states; decisions taken by international organizations are implemented by the nation states only if the national Parliaments ratify them. Even a small state could still carry on for quite a long time in total defiance of international resolutions; and if a state has troubles they are most likely to come from another state. Economic international organizations (like the International Monetary Fund) are strictly state-based and lend financial resources to other states who have, in many cases, squandered them and defaulted on repayments, without the international organization being able to do much more than provide a further loan. For all these reasons, talking of international organizations as mighty autonomous bodies is another empty myth, devoid of substance.

- The all-mighty multinational companies. The idea that multinationals are free to roam the earth, to install themselves wherever they like, to trade according to rules they devise; all these are mythical inventions that do not survive even a cursory analysis. First of all, in many countries foreign investment has been for decades forbidden or is still highly regulated [2001, Johan Norberg]. The so-called global companies are subject to national laws meaning that sometimes the lobbying (i.e. bribing) of national governments is necessary just to survive and operate. Secondly, the activities of multinational companies are continuously scrutinized both by investors (to spot economic

risks) and by activists (to spot social wrongdoings). A boycott (see the Shell case related to the disposal of the Brent Spar platform in 1995) has an almost immediate impact in changing policies (which is highly unlikely in the case of a nation state). The reason is simple: it takes ages for a big company to build its name but it does not take very long to destroy it if it acts in such a way as to compromise its social respectability and economic reliability. The state does not have this sort of problem. It follows then that the all-mighty multinationals are, in too many cases, a figment of the collective imagination. Without the monopolistic backing of the state they have only the power conferred on them by the consumers in their specific domain of trade. Nothing more, nothing less.

### **The mystifications of the movement**

In its fight against globalization, the movement also uses arguments that mystify the issues in the sense that, with an artful use of words and expressions, it makes what is, in actual fact, quite acceptable and reasonable, appear totally wrong and unsound.

This is especially evident in the charges levelled against multinational firms. Let us examine some of those arguments:

- Maximization of profits. In daily life, everybody's conscious economic actions are directed towards the maximization of benefits, for instance when selling or buying something. Clearly, we are not only economic calculating machines, but when economic transactions are concerned we act (or it is advisable to act) in that way. Buying at the highest price and selling to the lowest bidder might be commendably charitable behaviour but is not a sensible course of action in an economic context. So, to reproach a firm, an economic unit par excellence, with acting in a way that is proper to economic behaviour seems wholly unjustifiable. The deceitful emotional linking of magic terms (multinational-profit-maximization) makes what is in the nature of things appear as a crime. It would be much better to scrutinize carefully if these profits come from the sale of butter or bombs. This is the real issue.

To elaborate further on the theme, it is necessary to highlight the fact that the maximization of profits is taken for granted. In reality, this is not something that can always be achieved, given all the restrictions surrounding the reaching of that target; to name just a few: the behaviour of other individuals pursuing the same objective, the risks and uncertainties involved in every economic endeavour, the necessary skill and will needed just in order to stay afloat, and so on. Because of all this, in many cases, an economic unit (e.g. a big firm) might aim at maximizing security (continuity of existence) instead of maximizing profit. In general, an established firm goes for long-term profits (i.e. a steady continuous flow of profits) rather than for the maximum possible profit on a short-term basis.

Nevertheless, this idea of maximization of profits, even if it doesn't hold true in real life, remains a powerful propagandist tool. It evokes deep emotional feelings of repugnance because it has been causally associated with extraordinary exploitation of the work force, almost on a par with slavery. If somebody has a minimum of historical knowledge he/she should know that slavery was not at all conducive to the maximization of gains given the very low productivity and work carelessness on the part of most slaves. The same was true for forced labour or, more recently, when an industrial workforce totally hates and despises its job. The "human relations" and the "human resources" movements have shown, with a wealth of data, that individuals need to be motivated and well looked after in order to be highly efficient (in terms of production and so of profits). Crude exploitation might appear a simple explanation for high profits but is only a very silly and misleading one.

- Minimization of labour costs. The multinational companies are accused of locating themselves where the salaries are lowest. This is a statement that needs to be examined carefully because, on its own, it does not stand. If it were true we would have solved, a long time ago, most problems deriving from lack of industrialization in many countries.

In theory, a firm left free to operate without inducements or restrictions of any sort, has an interest in installing its production in

those areas where, taking into consideration all costs of transport (raw materials, finished goods), the productivity of the workforce (i.e. the relation between monetary value of production and monetary cost of wages) is highest.

Individuals without any productive skill or any regularity of working behaviour, or living in places with no infrastructures, no security for people and goods, in other words, situations of very low productivity and very high risk, are not appealing to any firms even if the wages are rock bottom or the absolute lowest on the entire planet.

Moreover, even when and where this relocation of production towards less congested areas would make social and economic sense, it is not so widespread as claimed, being obstructed by powerful vested interests both in the so called centre (e.g. protecting current jobs through subsidies to the national industry) and on the periphery (e.g. creating obstacles to investment because local élites are afraid of the social upheaval that might be brought about by industrialization).

For these reasons, the statement that the multinationals transfer their production where the wages are lowest is just nationalistic nonsensical sloganeering. However, even assuming that the multinational firms install themselves where the salaries are lower (not lowest), this should be taken as a positive aspect of their behaviour and certainly not as a reproachable action. This behaviour of the multinationals (which unfortunately does not correspond so often to reality) should not be reprimanded at all for various reasons:

- moral reasons. To move production towards areas where the wages are lower should be considered a meritorious and progressive way of spreading industrialization (assuming that we are in favour of it), and of improving the economic standard of life in backward regions.

- social reasons. The transferral of some production from highly congested places to un-industrialized regions makes possible a social re-generation of both areas, from the point of view of nature and culture.

- economic reasons. To move production to where the labour costs are lower (given a comparatively acceptable level of productiv-

ity) means that, because of the decline in the cost of production associated with universal competition, low-income consumers everywhere in the world can afford goods that were once reserved for the well off or the middle class.

- To employ children and women in the factories. The employment of children and women in factories conveys, once again, the images of the worst exploitation of the Industrial Revolution and appears as a phenomenon indefensible from every point of view. At least until we examine the matter a bit deeper, starting from the situation of many children and women in the underdeveloped countries.

In those countries there are some children who live in the streets, begging or doing anything in order to survive; there are some women working very hard in the fields; they are the real breadwinners, exploited by the family circle, especially by men. For these reasons a job in a multinational firm, where the wages are generally higher than elsewhere, would be a dream come true, a powerful first step towards emancipation and empowerment. Unfortunately, the idea of leaving the rural village to work in a factory miles away is presented to the women as a treason to family traditions and to the needs of the family itself, used to subjugate the freedom of the individual to the exigencies of the group. For this reason all sorts of rumours and lies are spread concerning those women working outside their close circle (family, neighbourhood); it is even assumed that they have become prostitutes [2001, Johan Norberg].

A similar position, only better presented, has been taken on board by many critics of globalization who, in their writings [see 2000, Naomi Klein] complain about the fact that factories attract women away from their village or that many children work in industries all over the world. This apparently humanitarian stance has led, for example, the American Congress to intervene, threatening the prohibition of imports from countries with factories employing children. The result has been the sacking of thousand of children in the Bangladeshi textile industry and in the Nepalese carpet industry [2001, Johan Norberg]. Or, it has led the French government, at the time of the 1998 Football World Cup, to ban soccer balls sewn in



Pakistan in factories employing many children. In these and other cases, most of the children that have been dismissed have subsequently moved into prostitution, or begging and stealing in the streets, while some have stayed hidden doing even more poorly paid jobs in even worse conditions [2001, Tomas Larsson]. All thanks to the "humanitarian" impulse of well fed bureaucrats and politicians in the West under the stimulus of very superficial and very ignorant protesters. To describe all this there is no more appropriate expression than the old saying: "the road to hell is paved with good intentions."

Clearly, hidden behind humanitarian reasons there is, most often, the ever present mercantilistic motive of protecting national producers and the national market. If politicians and protesters were really concerned with the universal human condition and not with their electoral power base or their narcissistic false humanitarianism, they would discover that, where trade has been liberalized, child labour has decreased as producers have been able to allocate their goods within a bigger market obtaining better returns, hiring adult workers at higher wages [see 2002, Dexter Samida].

- To be more powerful than many nation states. This idea derives from the fact that the budget of some multinationals is bigger than that of some nation states. But this does not say very much about the amount of power held and exerted unless we fall into the silly trap of identifying power with money. If this were true, the richest person on earth would be also the most powerful; if we have just a superficial knowledge of history, this is total nonsense as shown by the fate of rich Jews, exiled or gassed by a penniless failed ex-painter turned politician.

The truth of the matter is that multinationals are not free to invest in every country even if they wish to (up to 1998, direct foreign investment was still forbidden in 131 out of 161 developing countries) [2001, Johan Norberg]; where they can operate they do it at the risk of being expropriated by the nation state as happened not infrequently during the '60s and the '70s; they have to follow the bureaucratic (often senseless) rules established by the nation state and, what is more

important, they have to gain the benevolence of the ruling politicians, i.e. greasing palms just in order to work without many impediments. No wonder that there is no race to locate in many states, as the likely costs might exceed the possible profits.

However, the most important implicit assumption contained in this statement is that multinationals are not run by democratically elected leaders, while this is the case for many nation states. This formalistic argument totally misses the point as far as real control and influence, coming from the people affected, is concerned.

With regard to a multinational, the consumers can exert, every day, some power through their buying decisions. This is especially true if the multinational's brand is easily distinguishable and so also easily targetable. The same consumers as electors have, by contrast, only the possibility to designate their masters once every 4-5 years.

Moreover, if those consumers as social activists are against the decision of a multinational, a well-concerted boycott brings results in a matter of days or weeks. Instead, when an embargo on a country is declared, people can grow old and still see no results or, rather, the paradoxical results are those of giving more leverage to the clique in power who can grow rich charging exorbitant prices for scarce smuggled goods.

All in all, many indictments against multinational firms are only a vapour wave that obfuscates the eyes and the minds; they do not go to the core of the matter, which is to ascertain if these firms are:

- monopolistic (barring competition, relying on state protectionism)
- obnoxious (making useless or harmful production)
- polluting (discharging toxic substances into the environment)

It is on these MOP (monopolistic, obnoxious, polluting) firms, be they local, national or multinational, that everybody's attention and struggle should be focused until we mop them up from the face of the earth.

## **The omissions of the movement**

Besides the myths and mystifications, there are also strange omissions on the part of the anti-globalization movement that need to be pointed out because they reveal, once more, its illiberal attitudes (mercantilism) and inclinations (pro-statism).

Multinational firms and international organizations are accused of pushing for policies of free trade. The consequences, according to the anti-globalization movement, are the following:

- To widen the gap between rich and poor. The problem with this charge, even if proved true, is that it passes over in silence the real issue which is to see if free trade improves the conditions of everybody and especially of the worst off. The problem is not to ascertain if the rich are becoming even richer but if the poor are bettering their condition and are getting out of poverty. Paradoxically, the envy-based logic of the anti-globalizers could lead to accepting a worsening of everybody's situation, provided that the gap is reduced. What they implicitly and paradoxically would not object to is, then, a race to the bottom that is the surest and easiest way to reduce the gap.

As a matter of fact, the policies of trade liberalization have permitted millions of individuals, especially in Asia (China, India, South Korea, Singapore, etc.), to leave behind poverty and to embark on a process of social and economic emancipation [2001, Johan Norberg]. In this respect, the Maoist dream of making almost every village in China capable of relying on its own steel production resulted, between 1958 and 1961, in a colossal waste of energy, squandering of resources, famine, and 30 millions dying of starvation; on the other hand, the process of liberalization started in 1978 has led to the multiplication of trading and has enabled Chinese farmers to double their income within 6 years. The first experiment might have reduced (or even abolished) the gap between rich and poor because the most indigent had died and everybody was worse off; the second may have increased it, but this should not be relevant for anyone other than those with envious and devious minds.

- To destroy the environment. The accusation that some multina-

tional industries pollute the environment (true in some cases) should be more appropriately addressed to the nation states, which pretend to be in charge of protecting the environment, singly or in association. In reality, the nation states are the main culprits as:

- direct polluters: witness the situation in the ex Soviet Union or in many underdeveloped countries where the main polluters are state owned or state controlled enterprises.

- protectors of polluters: the producers can pollute only courtesy of state laws (or state misapplication of international protocols), state concessions, state rights of exploitation, state-granted commercial licenses.

Contrary to the belief of some anti-globalizers, research has shown that, generally, multinational firms are more in compliance with ecological standards than local firms, due to factors of international image and to their more up-to-date production methods. [2000, David Wheeler].

- To put an intolerable weight on the shoulders of the poorest (debt repayment, cuts in state expenditures, etc.). A strange aspect in all the discourses of the anti-globalization movement is that the policies of the states in the backward countries are rarely questioned or are mentioned only incidentally when the accumulation of debts is discussed. The reckless borrowing and subsequent squandering of financial resources are factors almost completely ignored, while the discourse is focused on the burden of interest charges and the conditions imposed for receiving further loans. The ensuing emotional picture distracts the attention from the real problem, which is the fact that the political élites, in both industrialized and backwards countries, have used people's money to support each other and to perpetuate situations of alienation, corruption and oppression.

Moreover, what is strangely omitted is the fact that 41 of the most indebted countries receive in financial aid more than they pay in interest for the debt. This means that the interest is entirely paid by the donors [2000, World Bank].

Furthermore, a large chunk of state expenditure in very backward countries dominated by illiberal regimes goes for the army, the

bureaucracy, the feeding of the political elite. No wonder that those regions (in sub-Saharan Africa) that have received most aid have remained the most backward. So, the notion of cuts in state expenditure does not mean very much with reference to social investment because this was either almost non-existent or it could still be financed through the state budget if parasitic strata were swept away and wasteful allocations abolished [see 2002, Brink Lindsey].

- To obliterate cultural identities. The so-called homogenization of cultural identities (or cultural imperialism or americanization) is a phenomenon that is:

- wrongly anticipated. To maintain that there is a Western homogeneous culture and that buying Western goods or watching Western movies makes a person westernized is equivalent to believing that there is a homogeneous Indian culture and that if we keep going to an Indian restaurant and buying Indian goods we are bound to become perfect Indians. Unfortunately the human mind is not so flexible as to allow people to be such chameleonic individuals. Besides that, people could have common tastes without being or becoming identical with each other.

- highly exaggerated. The dynamic between local culture and other external cultural expressions is much more complex than is assumed by the critics of globalization. International producers and distributors of goods and services are very conscious of it and so they try to adapt themselves to the local cultures. Besides, people themselves re-adapt the goods and messages of the global producer to their specific tastes and needs. It is a process of creolization that has been present at all times and in all places [2000, John Beynon and David Dunkerley eds., Part B: Globalization and Culture].

- mistakenly attacked. The cultural identities that are threatened with disappearance through a global flow of cultural messages are, in most cases, invented national identities that have been manufactured and quite often imposed by the nation states. Their extinction is a very healthy process because it might allow the re-emergence of local cultures within a global experience, as should have always been the case in the global village of planet earth.

On the whole, the unity and variety of human cultures get strengthened by the freedom of exchange and by the free flow of messages. Unifying cultural universal pluralities is a more desirable reality than upholding different clashing national identities.

The most serious omission in all the critical remarks of the anti-globalization movement concerns an actor whose role is either strangely minimized or whose behaviour is intentionally white-washed. This actor is the nation state.

Even when the nation state appears under attack by the anti-globalizers it is only a specific government that is questioned, as if the problem was not the state itself (bureaucracy, military apparatus, parasitic strata, etc.) but a particular ruler.

This is because the state, in the mind of the people of the so-called right and left, is still considered the irreplaceable fixture and the indispensable structure of social life. Their (conscious or unconscious) belief is that, without the state, civilization will crumble and society will fall apart. The equation state=civilization=society is so firmly entrenched in their brain that it is not surprising that the entity "state" should be omitted from their discourses as the entity directly responsible for the predicament that afflicts so many people.

In fact the anti-globalization movement considers the state more a victim of corporate greed (a "captive state") than a cunning trickster. And this is very odd because, even in the tales of some anti-globalizers, strange things emerge [2000, George Monbiot]. For instance, here we have the state collecting taxes without providing services and letting others (the so called private sector) intervene and charge for what has already been paid for through taxation. There we have the city council, which, after deciding on the destruction of inner city areas, gets the private sector to do the dirty job and takes its cut of the gains. Almost everywhere we have the state putting everything up for sale, clean air included, and at the same time making itself appear as a victim even when it is the only real culprit.

## **The good points of the movement**

Notwithstanding myths, mystifications and omissions, not everything in the anti-globalization camp should be dismissed as garbage. There are some aspects dealt with by the movement that are real and relevant and demand all our attention.

Generally they are points that are treated also by other movements who do not qualify as anti-global. Nevertheless, it is meritorious that some fringes of the anti-globalization movement have added their voice, in particular taking position in favour of:

- The protection of the environment
- The betterment of working conditions
- The freedom of expression and movement.

In this essay, the critique of anti-globalization positions certainly does not involve these issues. In fact, they do not lead at all to a rejection of globalism but to its exact opposite. Nevertheless sometimes they are taken as pretexts for introducing protectionism, granting monopolies and upholding parasitism.

This is, for instance, the case if we examine some proposals put forward by the anti-globalization movement that might appear very sensitive and sensible, but only to a very superficial eye.

## **The bad remedies of the movement**

Various components of the anti-globalization movement have advocated a series of objectives and measures that, in their opinion, would redress the balance of power and wealth in favour of the weakest/poorest countries. The main points come under the following labels:

- Fair Trade
- Debt Relief
- Tobin Tax

We will examine briefly each one to see if the proposals they contain go, really, in the right direction of promoting individual and social development.

## Fair Trade

The expression "Fair Trade" is very appealing and convincing and nothing can be said against it if it were not for the fact that it has been taken in opposition to "Free Trade." The anti-globalizers see "Fair Trade" as the proper antithesis to "Free Trade" and are in favour of the former as against the latter.

The concept of fair trade is not a new one and its origins do not bode well for the people in the countries the anti-globalizers want to support. In 1881, some politicians and businessmen set up in England the "Fair Trade League" that advocated the putting up of tariffs to protect British industries against competition from the emerging industrial powerhouses of Germany and the United States [1951, Keith Hutchinson]. One of the most vociferous exponents of the League was Joseph Chamberlain, the champion of the nationalistic and imperialistic policies carried out by the English state at the end of the 19th century. He was in favour of a system of protective and preferential tariffs to guard the empire against goods originating from other countries, a policy in total opposition to the previous open door one.

When Britain was an economy on the rise the battle cry was "free trade"; when other countries were emerging industrially and surpassing her, the battle cry changed to that of "fair trade." This slogan was not popular at the start but eventually succeeded, as shown by the fact that Import Duties were introduced in 1932 by a conservative government presided over by Neville Chamberlain, son of Joseph.

Then, on the basis of historical events, it could be said that "fair trade" is a euphemism employed by old industrialized nations (instead of the more vulgar term protectionism) as soon as they see a comparative decline in their economic predominance; and that protectionism is the ever recurrent instrument used by these nations to (try to) keep new emerging ones in a subordinate position, holding back their energies for fear of losing power and wealth. It is not by chance that the "fair trade" slogan has been manufactured in the West and repeated there more often than elsewhere. Again, it is not by chance that one of the most popular



texts of the anti-globalizers [2000, Naomi Klein] starts with mourning for the loss of the Toronto garment district, the industry having moved outside Canada to less industrialized and more competitive areas.

"Fair trade not free trade" is then the position of those in the old industrialized affluent countries that have lost energy and creativity and wish to stop the clock or to put it back to when their parents or grand-parents were the holders of power and wealth. This position is shared by the kleptocracies and bureaucracies in the backward countries that are afraid that industrialization, once left free to develop, will give strength and self-confidence to individuals and will encourage them to put an end to corruption and constrictions. This might explain why they restrict industrial activities to specific enclaves (Export Processing Zones) under their strict control.

"Fair trade is free trade" is, on the contrary, the position of those energetic and creative individuals, especially women, who, everywhere in the world, are fighting to emerge against all human manufactured obstacles, mostly put up by national and international bureaucracies. To mention just one example, Nancy Abeid Arahamane, a Mauritanian woman, had found a German importer who wanted to buy the camel cheese produced in her dairy in Nouakchott, Mauritania. What she didn't know was that without a special directive from the Super State Europe, ratified by the Parliaments of all the states of the Union, she could not export camel cheese [11/5/2001, Herald Tribune]. This and other cases (textiles, shoes, bikes, agricultural products, steel, etc.) represent a damning indictment of the policies of all those states that put up barriers of any type, are supported by mystifying slogans such as the "fair trade" one and, to clear their bad conscience and to keep everybody quiet, advocate economic aid for backward countries.

And this leads us to another bad remedy of the anti-globalization movement.

### **Debt Relief**

During the last twenty years of the 20th century the debt of many backward countries mounted to incredible heights and then

prompted the intervention of financial institutions, political bodies, charitable organizations.

The spectrum of measures put forward ranges from the rescheduling of the debts, to their reduction, all the way to their total cancellation. This last is the position taken, for instance, by the Catholic Church and other Christian confessions. From a religious, and especially from a Catholic perspective, this is a perfectly understandable request because it is in line with the idea of giving away (charity) without receiving back. And even if the funds provided have been badly used, the Catholic attitude calls for forgiveness.

To those who accept entirely the view of giving and forgiving, always and everywhere, there is nothing to be objected to as far as debt relief is concerned. On the other hand, if the attention is focused on development, it is very important to see if the resources provided have been well employed or squandered in parasitic uses and absurd endeavours, and if it is advisable to transfer/loan further resources and to whom.

The problem arises from the fact that even many anti-globalizers who do not share the Catholic attitude of giving and forgiving have, nevertheless, totally embraced the debt relief cause without questioning the role played and the results produced by financial aid in the second half of the 20th century. If they had paid the scantest attention they would have realized that financial aid has been the main obstacle to the development of individuals in backward countries. This policy has, instead, achieved two hideous results:

- to maintain criminal regimes and parasitic cliques in power
- to withhold self-realization and self-esteem.

For these reasons, it is quite unbelievable to discover over and over again that many anti-globalizers are not only in favour of wiping out the debt accumulated by these parasitic cliques (and this could be understandable because it is paid even by poor people in underdeveloped countries who have not profited from it) but also of the continuation and enlargement of financial aid and, what is extraordinary indeed, without any condition attached to it in terms of a balanced budget.

This is like writing a blank cheque to a scoundrel managing an orphanage, letting him do whatever he likes and then pretending to have helped people in need. To keep giving financial aid to corrupted state rulers is the surest way to keep cheaters and stealers in control, always and everywhere. In fact, analyses have shown a strong correlation between aid received and social and economic abuses. The most indebted states are also those with the most illiberal and corrupt regimes [2002, Fraser Institute]. So, if these views and practices continue to prevail, aid should be taken as the acronym of **A**cquired **I**nstilled **D**ependency or **A**way from **I**ndependence and **D**evelopment. The fact that the anti-globalization movement is dead keen on pursuing this road to disaster is indicated clearly by another proposal, which is another bad remedy.

### **Tobin Tax**

The Tobin tax, from the name of the economist that suggested it, is a tax on financial transactions. The aim is to control/reduce speculative movements of financial resources and to provide states with additional sums to employ for the development of the backward regions. In the hands of the anti-globalizers, the Tobin Tax has become an instrument to raise revenues for the state. So, once again, laudable intentions at the start hide, in the end, very dubious outcomes, to say the least. First of all, we should be wary of putting the state in charge of distinguishing between unproductive speculations and useful investments; for this reason, if future flows of financial resources find it convenient to go towards less industrialized countries, the Tobin Tax might act as a tax on investments in those very regions that are supposed to receive funds for productive growth. Secondly, the tax requires a large number of controls affecting every international transaction; this would mean the complete triumph of the state bureaucracies over entrepreneurship and productive energies. Finally, the idea that the revenue collected by the states (the estimates vary from 10 to 100 billion dollars a year) will be transferred to other states which then are supposed to promote development is, on the basis of previous experience, sheer chimera. We would then find ourselves in the worst possible scenario where the money collected

will be used, even more than now, for keeping in power despotic rulers and for keeping down the despondent ruled.

On the whole, the proposals of the anti-globalizers might realize that "race to the bottom" that they are imputing to globalization, but which would instead come as a result of their own policies. This diabolical dynamic has already been tried and if we keep forgetting the past we are bound to repeat the same awful mistakes.

### **The presumed lineages of the movement**

The anti-globalization movement comprises people from many different political backgrounds and with different social and economic conditions.

To use the ambiguous but still current label of right wing and left wing, under the same banners of anti-globalization we can find people from the extreme right to the extreme left.

While it is easily understandable that nationalistic fringes (right) are against globalization, it is almost impossible to grasp how people with an outlook in favour of internationalism (left) could be against it.

For this reason it is necessary to refer, albeit briefly, to the writings of two amongst the major figures of the socialist and anarchist movements to ascertain if their ideas can give any support to the positions of the anti-globalizers.

#### **Karl Marx**

If we examine the most famous political text of Marx and Engels, the *Communist Manifesto*, we are struck by the celebration of the industrial bourgeoisie as the maker of the world market.

"The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of Reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civi-

lized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production, the intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arise a world literature." [1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels]

This almost rapturous celebration of the revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie and this exaltation of the world market derives from the fact that, according to Marx and Engels, the post-capitalist society they envisage is the result of the capitalist mode of production being developed to its utmost and spread all over the world.

The inexorable progress of capitalism is considered the essential premiss for the overcoming of capitalism itself and for the emergence of the socialist society. Against it stand, according to Marx and Engels, some reactionary forces that are falsely considered socialist only because they are against the bourgeoisie. Marx and Engels call this anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeoisie movement, feudal socialism.

"Feudal socialism: half lamentation, half lampoon; half echo of the past, half menace of the future; at times, by its bitter, witty and incisive criticism, striking the bourgeoisie to the very heart's core; but always ludicrous in its effect, through total incapacity to comprehend the march of modern history. The aristocracy, in order to rally the people to them, waved the proletarian alms-bag in front for a banner. But the people, so often as it joined them, saw on their hindquarters the old feudal coats of arms, and deserted with loud and irreverent laughter." [1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels]

Unfortunately, Marx and Engels were not right when they assumed that the world market was an already assured reality and that the feudal parasitic classes, namely, in our age, politicians, bureaucrats and professional categories with vested protected interests, were on the wane. In actual fact, they had and still have many followers and much influence on people's minds. They have even used Marx himself for their own ends, which are in complete opposition to Marx's original message; this is achieved by distorting Marx's general conception, totally disregarding and discarding some of his positions that are a bit disturbing.

To some professed Marxists in the anti-globalization movement it would probably come as a shock to know that Marx was in favour of:

- Free trade

"Mais en général, de nos jours, le système protecteur est conservateur, tandis que le système du libre-échange est destructeur. Il dissout les anciennes nationalités et pousse à l'extrême l'antagonisme entre la bourgeoisie et le prolétariat. En un mot, le système de la liberté commerciale hâte la révolution sociale. C'est seulement dans ce sens révolutionnaire, Messieurs, que je [Karl Marx] vote en faveur du libre-échange." ("But, in general, the protective system of our day is conservative, while the free trade system is destructive. It breaks up old nationalities and pushes the antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie to the extreme. In a word, the free trade system hastens the social revolution. It is in this revolutionary sense alone, gentlemen, that I vote in favor of free trade.") [1848, Karl Marx]

- Child labour

"From the Factory system budded, as Robert Owen has shown us in detail, the germ of the education of the future, an education that will, in the case of every child over a given age, combine productive labour with instruction and gymnastics, not only as one of the methods of adding to the efficiency of production, but as the only

method of producing fully developed human beings." [1867, Karl Marx].

"... with a strict regulation of the working time according to the different age groups and other safety measures for the protection of children, an early combination of productive labour with education is one of the most potent means for the transformation of present-day society." [1875, Karl Marx]

- Extensive mechanization

Marx championed the introduction of all technological innovations that could make work more productive, shorten the working day and replace the human being in the most harsh and dull tasks. This view is summed up in the statement that

"in a communist society the machines would play a bigger role than in the bourgeois society." [1867, Karl Marx]

These are ideas that have been completely obliterated and, worst of all, attributed to the opponents of socialism and so condemned and fought against.

Conscious of the distortions operated on his thought by ardently professed Marxists (in particular Jules Guesde) while he was still alive, it is not surprising that Marx himself declared, as reported by Engels:

*"ce qu'il y a de certain c'est que moi, je ne suis pas marxiste"* ("what is certain is that [if they are Marxists], [then] I myself am not a Marxist"). (Friedrich Engels, *Letter to Eduard Bernstein*, 2-3 November 1882)

What can be said with a certain confidence is that the anti-globalizers are not Marxists, whatever they might think and proclaim.

**Pëtr Kropotkin**

The anarchist is an individual for whom the concepts of fatherland and foreigners have no meaning whatsoever. National borders

and national passports are, for an anarchist, idiotic inventions of the nation state, that is, products of a monopolist and protectionist racket ruled by a gang of scoundrels.

For this reason, when the state figures (politicians, bureaucrats, police, etc.) denounce the presence of anarchist elements in the anti-globalization movement they are only using a passe-partout word aimed at implicating the historical enemies of the state, ignoring that anarchists are, by definition, in favour of globalism (free circulation of individuals, ideas, goods), seeing in it the most powerful way towards the abolition of the sovereign state and the most appropriate and natural condition for the development of every human being.

For the same reason, any anti-globalizer who declares to be an anarchist might say so, perhaps, because he finds the word anarchy appealing, but he/she has not a clue as to what anarchists stand for. He/she is a very confused person who does not really know what he/she is doing or talking about.

To realize that this is the case it is sufficient to explore the writings of one of the most cultivated anarchists: Pëtr Kropotkin. His conception of social organization was to influence many of the best minds of the 20th century (amongst them, Patrick Geddes and Lewis Mumford).

On the basis of the industrial development of the 19th century Kropotkin, like Marx and Engels, was (too) confident that barriers had been removed. He saw that

"industries of all kind decentralise and are scattered all over the globe; and everywhere a variety, an integrated variety, of trades grows, instead of specialization." [1906, Pëtr Kropotkin]

According to Kropotkin there is no need to introduce tariffs in order to make industrialization possible. In fact,

"capital taking no cognizance of fatherlands, German and English capitalists, accompanied by engineers and foremen of their own nationalities, have introduced in Russia and in Poland manufacto-



ries whose goods compete in excellence with the best from England. If customs were abolished tomorrow, manufacture would only gain by it." [1906, Pëtr Kropotkin]

For Kropotkin the spreading of small and medium size industries is hampered not by technical costs of production but by difficulties in commercialization. He is for setting up cooperatives of small producers for the sale of their goods, and does not favour the putting up of protective barriers that would make commercialization even more difficult for the small producers, too weak and dispersed to lobby successfully for their rights.

He envisages universal development leading to the formation of regional communities that become self-sufficient for the basic products of life.

"The present tendency of economic development in the world is ... to induce more and more ... every region, taken in its geographical sense, to rely chiefly upon a home production of all the chief necessities of life. Not to reduce, I mean, the world-exchange: it may still grow in bulk; but to limit it to the exchange of what really must be exchanged, and, at the same time, immensely to increase the exchange of novelties, produce of local or national art, new discoveries and inventions, knowledge and ideas." [1899, Pëtr Kropotkin]

These are all very interesting positions that have nothing to do with protectionism and the control of trade by any institutional body, and certainly not by the state as advocated by the anti-globalizers. There is also no place whatsoever for the distribution of subsidies to agriculture. What Kropotkin stresses is food self-sufficiency that results from the dynamics of free production and free exchanges. What we instead have now, following the "regulatory" intervention of the state, is over-production of food in certain areas, that is stocked or destroyed or dumped on some regions at very low prices, damaging the cultivation and commercialization of crops of other areas. In

other words, the exact opposite of Kropotkin's view, and all because of state intervention.

Kropotkin is also in favour of the replacement of human workers by machines.

"Whenever a saving of human labour can be obtained by means of a machine, the machine is welcome and will be resorted to." [1899, Pëtr Kropotkin]

At the same time, Kropotkin underlines the fact that

"hand-work very probably will extend its domain in the artistic finishing of many things which are now made entirely in the factory; and it will always remain an important factor in the growth of thousands of young and new trades." [1899, Pëtr Kropotkin]

Kropotkin has also been the most consistent and intelligent advocate of the union of manual and intellectual work in the education of children in order to achieve what he calls "l'éducation intégrale." [1899, Pëtr Kropotkin]

All these are crucial differences between the perspective of the anti-globalizers, based on the defence of state controls and state intervention [see especially the writings of Susan George] and the anarchist vision that wants the pulling down of all restrictions to the spreading of activities and exchanges (except those justifiable from an ecological point of view), and certainly does not rely on any state intervention.

What can be said again with a certain confidence is that the anti-globalizers are not anarchists, whatever they might think and proclaim or, better, whatever the police of the national states might proclaim and make us to believe.

## **The real lineages of the movement**

The positions of two of the major exponents of the socialist and anarchist movements are then in stark opposition to the ideology of the anti-globalizers.

For this reason it is necessary to identify the real lineage of the movement in order to avoid any ambiguity and misunderstanding regarding their real aims.

Anti-globalization being a reaction to political liberalism, economic internationalism and cultural cosmopolitanism, it is necessary to look amongst critics of these tendencies in order to find the real sources of most of what is said and done by the movement.

Three figures are here taken as representative of the anti-globalization movement. This does not intend to suggest that they are the inspirers of the movement but only that many arguments put forward by the movement can be traced to the thinking of these scholars.

These figures are:

- Ferdinand Lassalle (political nationalism)
- Friedrich List List (economic nationalism)
- Johann Gottfried von Herder (cultural nationalism)

### **Ferdinand Lassalle (political nationalism)**

Ferdinand Lassalle was a leading exponent of the German workers movement around the middle of the 19th century.

His political thinking is centred on the impotence of the workers to better their economic situation (given the existence of an "iron law of wages") and the importance attributed to an external agent, the state, for the emancipation of the working class.

Because of the role given to the state, Lassalle's socialism is purely nation based. Marx remarked on this aspect when he wrote: "Lassalle, in opposition to the Communist Manifesto and to all earlier socialism, conceived the worker's movement from the narrowest national standpoint." [1875, Karl Marx]

In another passage he reproached the programme of the German

Worker's party (whose policies were based on Lassalle's ideas) with being "even infinitely below that of the Free Trade Party." [1875, Karl Marx]

In other words, in Marx's opinion, the Free Trade Party inspired by the bourgeoisie was much more advanced than the German Worker's party based on Lassalle "socialism."

In Lassalle, as in the case of modern day anti-globalizers, we find the fear of the world market accused of controlling the life of the workers ("the labourers cannot understand the reason why their individual condition is conditioned by the situation of the world market.") [1862, Ferdinand Lassalle]

Interpreting reality from a different perspective, Marx saw in the formation of the world market the necessary condition for world revolution, making it possible for the workers to take control of their own lives.

Lassalle's major text is a confutation of Frédéric Bastiat (a witty and passionate advocate of free trade), and the exposition of a policy in which the state is deputed to supervise production and distribution. For Lassalle, free universal exchange is the source of overproduction and commercial crises. That is why the state has to intervene.

In the *Gotha Programme* of the German worker's party, strongly inspired by Lassalle's ideas, one of the key objectives is the establishment of the "free state." Marx would make a total mockery of this political aim, declaring explicitly: "Freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it, and today too, the forms of state are more free or less free to the extent that they restrict the 'freedom of the state'." [1875, Karl Marx]

In short, two main points of the programme of Lassalle, the rejection of free trade and the approval of state intervention, are advocated also by the anti-globalization movement, within an outlook that can be defined as National Socialism.

**Friedrich List** (economic nationalism)

Friedrich List was a self educated economist who pleaded for the

introduction of tariffs, maintaining that this would allow the establishment of industries in those countries (notably, Germany) that had started later (with respect to England) on the path to industrialization.

His position is not at all one of generalized and permanent protectionism. In fact, he was in favour of the abolition of tariffs between the German states in order to set up a large free trade zone. Moreover, he was against putting up tariffs for agricultural products. Finally, the protection accorded to industries was not to last indefinitely but only the (short) time necessary to strengthen them in order to allow them to compete on an equal basis.

Nevertheless, industrial protectionism remains associated with the name of List and every additional qualifying point has faded into the distance.

There are two aspects of List's thinking that have been taken on board by some strands of the anti-globalization movement. They are:

- The opposition between the political economy (centered on the nation state) and the cosmopolitan economy (embracing the entire world). This supposed opposition between nation and world makes List declare that "what is safe and useful in world trade, in general, can harm and be damaging for the national trade, and vice versa." [1841, Friedrich List] List's proposals are expressly centered on the nation and in favour of the growth of the nation ("the welfare of the nation"; "the national interests"), to which every economic aspect is subordinate. This point is shared by many anti-globalizers who would agree that "the government is not only authorized, but obliged to regulate, in the interest of the nation, a trade that is in itself harmless." [1841, Friedrich List]

- The protection of so-called "infant industries. List's argument, not always presented in a consistent way, is that new industries need protective barriers so that they can grow strong in order to be able to compete on the world market. However, he is not in favour of long lasting tariffs and, what might seem strange, he does not recommend putting up heavy protective tariffs for industries at their start. He expressly says: "When the manufactures are in their initial stage of

development, protective tariffs have to be very low; they have to be raised little by little in relation to the increase in the country of intellectual and material capitals." In fact, a non industrialized region needs to be open in order to attract industries from the outside, not to discourage them with barriers of any type.

Having said this, the image conveyed up to now by interpreters and followers and, in some passages, by List himself, is that of industries conceived as babies who need strong protection at birth and right until they are able to stand on their own feet. This image is very appealing but it is doubly wrong. In fact, it does not apply to industry for two major historical reasons:

- In many cases, the late comers have been able to learn from trials and errors committed by the first comer; for this reason, industries freshly formed or established in a new region can introduce the latest technological equipment without the need (and cost) of passing through various technological phases. That is why, for instance, old industrial nations accuse the new ones of dumping. The explanation is simple: the so-called infant industries come to life already well equipped for competition, without any dead weight of the past.

- Wherever and whenever industries are protected they are most easily inclined to assume the bad habit of requiring continuous protection. Past experience shows that infant industries under state tutelage remain industries in a permanent infant state. This is an almost universal law that applies also to pampered and spoiled children. In the case of industry, the qualification infant is more important than the noun industry; they are treated like infants that are not likely ever to become strong autonomous entities.

Economic nationalism, based on state protectionism, leads to another inspirer of the anti-globalization movement.

### **Johann Gottfried von Herder** (cultural nationalism)

Johann Gottfried von Herder is remembered as one of the first voices to praise popular cultures as possessing, each one, some specific characteristics worthy of respect. The merit of this view is, nevertheless, reduced or even cancelled when it is upheld in opposition to cosmopolitanism and in conjunction with political and

economic nationalism. In this case it gives rise to cultural nationalism, that is:

- the pretension of the existence of a national culture even where only different local traditions existed;
- the protection of these presumed national cultures against so-called foreign influxes.

As a matter of fact, what happened in history was that, out of many local cultural expressions, one national culture was artificially manufactured. This was made possible through the imposition by the state apparatus, on everybody living on a certain territory, of some dominant traditions, the eradication of all the others and the exclusion of external cultural contributions as if they were contagious viruses.

This process is most clearly evident with respect to the language. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, for instance, delivered his *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (1807-1808) ["The Addresses to the German Nation"] putting forward the thesis that the presence of foreign vocables in a language can corrupt the genuine morality of a people. Friedrich Jahn seems to have stated in a public speech: "he who allowed his daughter to learn French was delivering her up to prostitution." [1960, Elie Kedourie]

During the first half of the 20th century these ideas found implementation in the cultural policies of many nation states, not only dictatorial ones such as those under fascism and national socialism, but also the so-called democratic republics such as the French state with its measures against linguistic minorities (e.g. the Corsicans).

In quite recent times, again with reference to France, these ideas have appeared in the political stances of the former Minister of Culture, the socialist Jack Lang, with his defense of the French language, French cinema, French music and so on.

The anti-globalizers have incorporated into their thinking this aspect of defending national cultures (supposing that something like this could or should exist autonomously) and protecting national identities (accepting this to be a meaningful cause). Unfortunately, most of them have not grasped the fact that

- culture is not a territorial phenomenon, limited by national borders, to be kept protected from "external" changes;
- culture is not a static phenomenon, but, on the contrary, an ever-changing one that cannot remain the same (*identidem*) if it is worth its name.

For these reasons a national cultural identity is a meaningless expression, besides being a non-existent reality that fails to take into account either local traditions or global attitudes.

On the whole, the points of reference of the anti-globalization movement belong to a world made of nation states; the aim (conscious or unconscious) of its promoters and followers is then to buttress the nation state, which is at risk of disappearance by the advancement of the global village. All this this would be highly damaging for those who have some privileges to lose or are simply afraid that they will be on the losing side.

### **Feelings, Figures, Facts of the movement**

The anti-globalization movement, as previously said, is a very miscellaneous one, inclusive of the most disparate political positions, all united by the defense of the nation state (welfare state, closed state, protectionist state). In order to complete this very sketchy picture of the movement it is necessary now to highlight some feelings, figures and facts that are related to the movement and to the whole scenario where the actions of the movement take place.

#### **Feelings**

The feelings are drawn from the positions held by many people in the movement and by their way of reasoning. Very often these feelings would be openly denied even when it is made clear that they derive necessarily from the chosen perspective. However, as long as those views remain, so do the (unconscious) feelings logically and factually associated with them, namely:

- Envy. The stress on the gap between rich and poor instead of the scrutiny of the reality, to ascertain if the poor or if some poor (and, in this case, which poor) are bettering their situation, reveals a mentality



based on envy. This is the same narrow-minded sentiment that brings somebody to believe (rightly or wrongly) that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence. This is often compounded by the conviction that this is the result of dirty tricks or devious plots on the part of our neighbours. To focus on the rich would be more than appropriate whenever their wealth comes from exploitation of the poor; but in this case the issue to be tackled should be the exploitation itself. Given the way this argument is presented, it must be pointed out that there are many well-off people (for instance those living in the Scandinavian countries) that have built their wealth relying on their own energy and creativity. All this gets totally ignored in the discourse and that is why envy is the appropriate term to define the sentiment behind the gap argument. Envy is compounded by another despicable feeling.

- Greed. The personal situation is not seen in relation to the satisfaction of healthy needs in an appropriate way (quantitatively and qualitatively) but in relation to the continuous accumulation of wealth. We are referring, in this case, to people in rich nations and to their complaint that globalization is making them poorer (less rich) or is slowing down the growth of their income. The greed factor is behind many anti-globalizers' discourses wherever terms like "de-industrialization" or expressions like the "race to the bottom" pop up. Some people in industrialized countries are afraid that their accumulation of riches cannot grow indefinitely, and this introduces a further feeling present in the movement.

- Fear. The anti-globalization movement is the most evident expression of the fear by the rich world of new upsetting dynamics. When the anti-globalizers talk of downsizing and delocalization they refer to something that affects the rich world. These phenomena, which might contribute to "the rise from the bottom" of the people in the backward countries (cheaper industrial goods, more opportunities for earning a living) are seen as a menace to the affluence and security of the old industrialized countries and so to their more or less affluent people. If we compound all this with the fear towards the so-called foreign people who are said to come to steal jobs and to

modify the national way of life, we have the clear picture of the paranoia that affects the most nationalistic fringes of the anti-globalization movement. This attitude of fear has spread, willingly or unwillingly, to the entire movement, witness the use, by both left and right-wing parties, of terms like "clandestines" or "illegal immigrants" with reference to individuals from non-European countries, whose movement is severely curtailed.

These feelings have been manufactured and transmitted by a series of figures who mainly inhabit in the national political arena.

### Figures

The main figures who characterize the anti-globalization movement are:

- The sensationalist journalist. Without the heavy intervention of the mass media which have acted as a sound multiplier, the movement would not have come so fast to prominence. For instance, the Seattle demonstration against the WTO was a feast of journalists talking about photographers who were taking pictures of cameramen who were filming demonstrators [see Time Magazine, December 13, 1999]. It was an exemplary case of the spectacularization of politics. No movement has received such a vast global exposure in such a short time as the anti-globalization movement.

- The state-related personage. The movement, especially in the USA, has been fuelled by politicians (e.g. Ross Perot, Pat Buchanan) and trade unionists fearful of a flight of jobs to less developed areas (for instance to Mexico after the introduction of the NAFTA, the North America Free Trade Agreement). As a matter of fact, the '90s saw a spectacular economic performance by people in the United States, flatly disproving the "race to the bottom" thesis [1999, Michael Cox and Richard Alm]. However, it is true that obsolete and uncompetitive industries have gone out of business (as they usually do) and this has been enough to 'activate' those who have something to lose by the advancement of freedom and technological progress.

- The deluded political activist. After the collapse of communism and the end of the myths of total social regeneration, the anti-globalization movement arrived, just in time, to fill a void, eagerly occupied

by the political activist in search of a cause. Many insecure and anxiety ridden young (and not so young) individuals have embraced the cause of poor people in poor nations against the all powerful multinationals without taking much care to check if they were, at the same time, upholding the present system of state exploitation based on state controls and state restrictions of movement (of people, goods, cultural artifacts).

What is remarkable is that many of these figures keep repeating their arguments even in the presence of facts that should shake profoundly their assuredness.

### **Facts**

The anti-globalization movement is characterized by strange contradictions that reveal its roots in mainstream statist thinking and its inability (or rather, unwillingness) to transcend it through serious analyses and anti-conventional behaviour.

The vocabulary of its main exponents is full of terms taken straight from the armoury of statism. The magic words of public and private are widely employed and the deceitful identification of public=state is used implicitly as a matter of fact. For them the society is the state and society exists only as the state and its laws. That is why free unregulated exchanges are not acceptable because they transcend the sphere of the state.

This produces a series of ironic contradictions that are not really noticed either by the protagonists or by the social observers and commentators. It substantiates the remark about the superficiality and fad-driven essence of the movement.

To take an example, the political leaders of the most industrialized countries are accused of acting as globalizers or of being pro-globalization. These are the same individuals who enforce stringent border controls for people and put up tariffs against the free circulation of goods. At the same time there is an anti-globalization group that acts under the name of "No Borders." These are clearly cases where the meaning of words and the sense of reality have been turned upside down, with the supposed globalizers putting up fences and the so-called anti-globalizers trying to pull them down. So we

have fake "globalizers" in favour of well-defined borders for people and goods, and fake "anti-globalizers" fighting for total freedom of movement for everybody and everything, everywhere.

Another strange occurrence is the fact that the logo of a book against logos has become a new logo [2000, Naomi Klein]. That book being like a bible for anti-globalizers, it should make many individuals think carefully about the consistency and lucidity of the major spokespersons of the movement. This remark applies to many global icons of the movement (Naomi Klein, José Bové, Susan George, etc.) who are present on the global conferencing and publishing scene through transnational organizations and multinational publishing companies in order to spread an anti-global message. Very snobbish and also very fishy.

Out of this mess, and generally, out of any mess, nothing good is likely to originate. In fact, this is the most favourable terrain for social meddlers and political peddlers to carry on their half tragic and half idiotic ventures.

In recent times, some sectors of the anti-globalization movement have refused this label and are calling themselves "new global." But the solution is not changing labels but changing ideas and behaviour, that is leaving behind a way of thinking and acting based on the state as the supreme agent and moving to a paradigm where the freedom and care of individuals and communities by individuals and communities play the central role. For this we have to go beyond globalism and antiglobalism.

### **Beyond globalism and antiglobalism**

This essay has aimed to refute many of the arguments put forward by the anti-globalization movement and has tried to show that globalism is not a reactionary plot by powerful sharks but the revolutionary activity of many small fish, navigating the oceans and freely communicating with each other.

The arguments of the anti-globalization movement lead us back into the crushing embrace of Big Brother the nation state, which has

never been the defender of the local community and the protector of the individual person.

The "think globally act locally" message has been turned upside down by the anti-globalizers who act globally (from Seattle to Prague, from Gothenburg to Genova) while thinking along very narrow and short-term lines.

The menacing scenarios presented by some scaremongers, for instance the image of a few multinationals dominating the world, is more a nightmarish invention than a current possibility as some recent episodes have made clear (e.g. the collapse or retreat of over-extended telecommunication companies). The more we open the world to healthy and free competition, the more the big companies will be bound to restructure themselves along more dynamic lines. Huge conglomerates in an open world are like dinosaurs on the way to extinction or reduction to more appropriate dimensions, if this is possible. They resemble the once few and powerful mainframes, bound to be displaced and replaced by the infinite small nodes of the network.

The main focus should not be on the MacDonald's outlets of this world but on the like of (Douglas) MacArthur (the generals) and (Joseph) McCarthy (the politicians); otherwise they will always prevail with their nefarious interventions even after hamburgers and fast food have gone out of fashion.

Globalism is, for many people, the only way to escape political oppression, economic poverty, cultural alienation.

However, even this grand vision of emancipation and progress connected to globalism does not represent the core of the matter, being still full of limitations and distortions linked to a discourse based on globalism versus antiglobalism.

As usual the issue is simpler and clearer than it is generally thought and is centered on a simple clear word, as it has always been since the beginning of time: FREEDOM.

The real issue is not globalization vs. anti-globalization but liberation vs. subjection, especially with reference to the nation state with

its protected cohort of monopolistic producers and parasitic consumers (the bureaucracy, the army, etc.).

What is at stake is not globalism or localism but freedom and nothing else than freedom.

We do not need to pile up data or write long treatises to show that freedom is a human value and servitude is not, that the earth belongs to humankind for the care of present and future generations and is not the closed territorial racket of national rulers and their corrupt or credulous appendages.

For this reason, whenever and wherever a debate on globalization takes place, after listening carefully to the various positions and arguments put forward and having worked out in our mind all the possible implications, we should sincerely ask ourselves: where is freedom? who is really advocating freedom? how can we better develop freedom?

According to the answers we should know where we stand.

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This essay has not been overburdened with statistical data as they are easily accessible in many documents on the Web and in some books. In any case, the advocacy of freedom does not need any statistical support. It is a moral issue that has its foundations in human nature and in the desirability of its development.

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## CAPITALISM / ANTICAPITALISM

From capital-capitalist to capitalism

Capitalism: features

Anti-capitalism as post-capitalism

Anti-capitalism as neo-mercantilism

The transformation of capitalism

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From capital-capitalist to capitalism

**T**he terms capital and capitalist came into use towards the middle of the 18th century to designate means of production and their owner/employer.

With reference to capital, Adam Smith divides the stock of goods owned by someone into two parts.

"That part which, he expects, is to afford him this revenue, is called his capital. The other is that which supplies his immediate consumption." [1776, Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Book II, chapter 1]

Smith does not employ the word capitalist, preferring either a circumlocution ("the owner of capital"; "the persons whose capitals are employed") or a concrete, specific noun (farmer, manufacturer, merchant, retailer). [1776, Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, see especially Book II, chapter 5].

David Ricardo gives the following definition of capital:

"Capital is that part of the wealth of a country which is employed in production, and consists of food, clothing, tools, raw materials, machinery, etc. necessary to give effect to labour." [1817, David Ricardo, *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, Chapter V, On Wages]

Ricardo employs the term capitalist now and then, sparingly, using more often the concrete, specific nouns of manufacturer and farmer.

Neither Adam Smith nor David Ricardo seemed to have ever employed the term "capitalism." A possible explanation might be that these two authors, while struck by the high productivity brought about by the new organization of labour and the introduction of new machines, did not consider the wider use of capital, the development of trade and the growth of production as something heralding a new historical period, to be qualified by a brand new name.

Adam Smith and David Ricardo were certainly aware of the advent of a larger freedom of commerce (at least in England and with respect to the strictures of the feudal and mercantilist periods) that had liberated energies and led to a more productive division of labour, technical and social.

They realized also that production had taken a new dimension and that larger amounts of capital (compared to labour) and higher

business skills were required in an industrial enterprise. But this meant only that the attention should be focused on capital (fixed and circulating) and on the way it was made to work by the capitalist (e.g. division of labour).

Besides Smith and Ricardo, many other scholars like Charles Babbage (1832) and Andrew Ure (1835) applied themselves to the task of writing about the mechanical progress and the technical novelties of their times, in the service of production.

So central had the role of capital become in social life that Karl Marx titled his major work "Das Kapital"; and this shows the importance that he too (or he especially) was according to technology and production.

In *Wage Labour and Capital* Marx gave the following definition of capital:

"Capital consists of raw materials, instruments of labour and means of subsistence of all kinds, which are utilized in order to produce new raw materials, new instruments of labour and new means of subsistence." Further down he states: "Capital, also, is a social relation of production." [1849, Karl Marx]

To stress the importance attributed by Marx to capital, that is to productive technological devices, in the shaping of society, it is sufficient to refer to a famous passage in the *Misère de la philosophie*:

"Social relations are closely bound up with productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist." [1847, Karl Marx]

While using extensively the terms "capital" and "capitalist," Marx almost never employs the word "capitalism," preferring the expression "capitalist mode of production" or "capitalist form of production"

to qualify what was taking place in the sphere of social and economic life.

It might then appear as a surprise to somebody that none of the three classic economists (Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Karl Marx) seemed to have found the need to use the specific term "capitalism" to designate a certain period of history.

The word "capitalism" came to the fore only at the beginning of the 20th century and it has been extensively employed ever since.

The merit (or demerit) of its conception and diffusion deserves to be ascribed to a different category of scholars. They were sociologists and historians, of German extraction and of, mainly, socialist or liberal tendencies.

In 1902 an influential book was published bearing the title *Der Moderne Kapitalismus* [Modern Capitalism]. In those pages, its author, Werner Sombart, traced the root of capitalism from ancient times to the modern age. He defined capitalism as:

"an economic organization of exchanges, in which basically two different groups of people, the owners of the means of production ... and the workers with no property, cooperate in a rational process of production, joined by the market." [1902, Werner Sombart]

In another text, *Der Bourgeois* (1913) Sombart identified the spirit of capitalism in the union of initiative and risk taking attitudes with economic acumen and reckoning. [1913, Werner Sombart]

On the subject of the spirit of capitalism the famous text by Max Weber, *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* had already appeared [1904-1905, Max Weber].

So, the term capitalism got well established in academic circles at the beginning of the 20th century and was then taken up by (socialist) critics of the industrial system who were, rightly, focusing their attention on some (past and present) negative aspects related to work mechanization and social deprivation, but often overlooking or minimising the new possibilities opened up by the revolution in the means and forms of production.



Throughout the 20th century the term was not only used but also overused and, quite extensively, misused in many places by many people. It is then important to identify and list the essential and original features of what is now generally known as "capitalism."

### **Capitalism: features**

To single out the main traits of capitalism we refer once again to the classic writings of Smith, Ricardo and Marx.

In their writings three aspects come to the fore as the cornerstones of capitalist attitude and action, in contrast to the thinking and acting of the mercantilist period. They refer to:

- **Free pursuit of self-interest** (individuals)

There are two implications related to the free pursuit of personal interest:

- Firstly, it means that all restrictions of status have been put aside and the human being is free to follow what his wishes and inclinations suggest and not what is imposed by an external power (the church, the state, the family, the guild, etc.). This results in a liberation of energies of individuals (singly and in association) that were previously not only untapped but also generally obstructed by social conventions and legal constrictions.

- Secondly, a lasting self-interest not only is compatible with the interest of others but is, often, the best way to foster it; following freely his inclinations and attending soundly to his occupations, each one will pay attention to finding the best possible allocation of limited resources, with the result of improving not only his but everybody's lot. [see 1776, Adam Smith]. Clearly we are referring to the self-interest of honest producers and wary consumers.

On the whole, self-interest has nothing to do with merely selfish behaviour or with benefits flowing only to a single person (or industry or nation) to the detriment of others. Moreover, this would have nothing to do with capitalism because it would be beyond the sphere of possibilities of the capitalist who cannot control the spreading of benefits because of his circumscribed role and limited

power in influencing decisions. And this introduces us to the second main aspect of industrial capitalism.

- **Free international trade** (relations)

The affirmation of international free trade with its twin aspects of competition (within sectors of production) and cooperation (amongst different productive sectors) represents a total break with conventional thinking and practices of the mercantilist age (state regulations and protectionism). There are two features that have been underlined by the classic economists:

- Exchange leads to positive change. According to Smith, the cooperation amongst human beings, that manifests itself in the form of the division of labour, is greatly increased by the multiplication of exchanges. And this leads to changes, that is improvements, in the modes of production with a view to a higher productivity, in order to satisfy the needs of a larger number of consumers.

- Exchange brings reciprocal benefits. Ricardo is the one who has best illuminated the fact that international trade brings reciprocal benefits even when the goods exchanged are produced more cheaply in one country (that is, when the absolute terms of trade are favourable to one nation), because what counts are the relative advantages derived by the division of labour. For Ricardo, unfettered trade is the surest way for everybody to gain and benefit. We could take his argument in favour of international free trade as an extension and strengthening of the self-interest thesis:

"Under a system of perfectly free commerce ... the pursuit of individual advantage is admirably connected with the universal good of the whole." [1817, David Ricardo, *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, On foreign trade]

So, more production and cheaper consumption are the results, in the medium to long term, of a better allocation of capital deriving from the dynamics of free exchanges (competition and cooperation). And this brings us on to another aspect of industrial capitalism.

- **Free technological development** (inventions)

Improvements in the means of production have appeared throughout history. Many discoveries took place in China long before

the Industrial Revolution but found a political and social atmosphere that was unreceptive if not openly hostile. In England too, before and during the Industrial Revolution, inventors had a harsh reception as some episodes in the lives of William Lee (stocking-frame, 1598), John Kay (fly-shuttle, 1733) and James Hargreaves (spinning-jenny, 1765) amply demonstrate [1905, Paul Mantoux, *La révolution industrielle au siècle XVIII*, see Second Part, chapter 1]. It is only during the 19th century that technological improvements applied to the means of production became not only accepted but also encouraged and the new instruments found a show-case in the Crystal Palace Exhibition (London 1851). The freedom to experiment and to invent finally joined the freedom to act in pursuit of personal interest and to trade for the attainment of reciprocal benefits. The list of all those who applied their ingenuity and creativity to the improvement of the mechanical arts is long. Sometimes we are left only with the names of the last in the chain who perfected and patented the previous improvements of several others.

One of the best scholars and most enthusiastic advocates in portraying the capitalistic mode of production as technology dominated/driven is Karl Marx [1867, Karl Marx, see especially *Das Kapital*, Book I, chapter XIII]. For Marx, what is now known as capitalism is tantamount to the incessant revolutionizing of the means of production; for this reason its distinctive mark is the technological push that destroys all previous, obsolete and backward modes of production [1961, Kostas Axelos, *Marx penseur de la technique*].

For capitalism to emerge and consolidate, the ruling economic system, that is mercantilism [1931, Eli F. Heckscher, *Merkantilismen*], had to be critically dissected and actually displaced. This is what Adam Smith did theoretically in his major work and what the new capitalist merchants and entrepreneurs performed practically in their daily activities.

The capitalistic features previously pointed out are all anti-mercantilist stances. In particular, the continuous technological development is the one aspect that really characterizes the age of capitalism (i.e. industrialism); but its emergence is only possible on

the basis of the individual freedom to act in order to satisfy personal interests and the individual freedom to trade in order to satisfy personal needs.

All these aspects are so closely linked that the disappearance or the curtailing of one of them strongly affects the survival of the others. For instance, the restriction of free trade influences negatively the opportunities for invention and the pace of introduction of new devices. As a matter of fact, the obstacles put in the way of the circulation of goods act also as obstacles to the circulation of ideas and to the expression of inventiveness. [1905, Paul Mantoux]

All the features characterizing capitalism (i.e. self-interest, international trade, technological development) have, as their common thread, the word "free" insofar as freedom underlies and links all the aspects of capitalist endeavours. We could say that without freedom (to act, to trade, to invent) there would have been no capitalism. At the same time, we should not identify capitalism with freedom, because freedom is a larger and deeper concept that existed in the minds and souls of individuals long before we had any notion of capitalism.

Moreover, we cannot identify capitalism with aspects like the pursuit of profit, the existence of markets, or the use of machines and the personal ownership of means of production.

With respect to (monetary) gains, Max Weber stressed a long time ago that

"the impulse to acquisition, pursuit of gain, of money, of the greatest possible amount of money, has in itself nothing to do with capitalism. This impulse exists and has existed among waiters, physicians, coachmen, artists, prostitutes, dishonest officials, soldiers, nobles, crusaders, gamblers, and beggars. One may say that it has been common to all sorts and conditions of men at all times and in all countries of the earth, wherever the objective possibility of it is or has been given." [1904-1905, Max Weber, *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*]

As for the presence of markets and exchanges, Adam Smith recognized as intrinsic to human nature

"the propensity to truck, barter and exchange one thing for another."  
[1776, Adam Smith, Book I, chapter 2]

A renowned historian like Fernand Braudel goes so far as to identify society with exchange (or "les jeux de l'échange") when he states:

"Money is a very old invention, if I mean with it every means that speeds up exchanges. And without exchanges we cannot talk of society." ["La monnaie est une très vieille invention, si j'entends par là tout moyen qui accélère l'échange. Et sans échange, pas de société."] [1985, Fernand Braudel, *La dynamique du capitalisme*]

Machines and tools have always existed, even in some sophisticated and highly ingenious forms like automata. Not all of them have become means of production but, when that has happened, they have been, almost always and everywhere, owned by specific individuals.

For this reason, to state that capitalism

"is an economic system in which the means of production are privately owned" [1998, Larry Allen, *The Companion to Capitalism*]

means to cover with the term "capitalism" almost the entire course of socio-economic history.

On the basis of these considerations, it would be utterly misleading to take some common traits of human nature (pursuit of gain), some basic aspects of social life (exchange), or the personal ownership of some resources (means of production) as the marks of capitalism. Because, even the most cursory survey shows that these realities have always existed (even where they had been castigated or outlawed) and will cease to exist only when the human adventure is over.

What could be stated instead is, simply, that capitalism is:

- the coming to pre-eminence of industrial capital (machines) with respect to other factors of production (land and labour);
- the coming to the fore of the industrial capitalist who, playing initially the role of merchant and entrepreneur, becomes the central figure of a new form of socio-economic organization;
- the coming to realization of the advantages to be gained by avoiding or removing all feudal and mercantilist restrictions to trade and production.

Capitalism (i.e. industrialism) is then a mode of production based on the extensive use of capital (machinery) by the capitalist (the owner and employer of capital) unfettered by status conventions or state restrictions.

### **Anti-capitalism as post-capitalism**

The very features of industrial capitalism (freedom to act, freedom to trade, freedom to invent) were conducive to a continuous upheaval of all previously static situations.

Industrial capitalism is a permanent world-shaking phenomenon of market enlargements, technical developments, new personal roles and wider social relations.

The scholar who best understood and portrayed this aspect of capitalism, i.e. industrialism, is Karl Marx. He is the greatest extoller of the capitalistic mode of production and of its supposed agent, the bourgeoisie.

In his own words, the bourgeoisie becomes a mythical class with superhuman power, capable of accomplishing feats that no one has ever imagined or dared to perform before.

"The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part."  
 "It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former Exoduses of nations and crusades." [1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels]

For Marx and Engels, there was something worse than being exploited by the capitalistic mode of production and that was to be left outside of this permanent and unstoppable social and technological turmoil from which a new humanity and a new society would one day emerge. Because

"the bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society." [1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels]

Marx and Engels see capitalism, or rather the capitalistic mode of production, as only a phase in history, an economic form that will be superseded once the productive forces (human beings, technological implements) are more fully developed. This development will bring about a break that will lead beyond the capitalistic relations of production that would have, by then, become negative factors, restricting and limiting the further development of human beings.

For Marx and Engels the features of capitalism (self-interest, world market and powerful technological development) are the foundations on which to build the post-capitalist society. They certainly do not support vested interests, national protected markets or anti-technological practices.

Marx and Engels see the full development of capitalism as the way to overcome all the existing divisions and fractures, namely that between manual and intellectual work and that between town and country. Further on, the opposition between the political state and civil society will be resolved in favour of civil society through the withering away of the state.

For all these reasons, Marx and Engels are, at the same time, the celebrators of industrial capitalism and the earthly visionaries of a new world beyond it.

Their anti-capitalism expresses, at the same time, ultra-capitalist and post-capitalist feeling and thinking. Ultra-capitalist because they want the full implementation of the capitalistic agenda and tenden-

cies (individual freedom, world exchanges, hyper technological development); post-capitalist because they realize that capitalism is going to reach a point of diminishing effervescence and returns in terms of progress and has to be supplanted in order for humankind to advance and the full liberation of all human beings to be accomplished.

Marx and Engels were very clear in considering industrial capitalism only as a historical phase, when the inanimate productive forces (the machines) dominate the human producers. Once the capitalistic mode of production had exhausted its revolutionary mission of enlarging production and, at the same time, developing all the productive forces, it had to be superseded. For this reason the anti-capitalism of Marx and Engels had nothing to do with nostalgia for bygone pre-capitalistic days but with the craving for the freedom and well-being that a post-capitalist society, built on the achievements of industrial capitalism, would bring, everywhere, to everybody.

### **Anti-capitalism as neo-mercantilism**

The establishment and advancement of industrial capitalism was not a joyful and peaceful affair, not even when there was something to gain, in the short or long term.

For some individuals, cooperation in manufacturing production meant performing simple repetitive tasks, as in the famous example of the pin factory [1776, Adam Smith, Book I, chapter 1]. In those cases, the human being was reduced to the function of a cog in a machine.

As for industrial competition, it could signify losing one's livelihood because more effective methods or instruments of production had been introduced somewhere, making some producers no longer economically viable. Clearly, this dynamics, while advantageous for the consumers at large, was of no (immediate) solace for those who had lost their occupation (wages) or their business (profits).

Those who suffered from the transformations brought about by industrial capitalism often played a double role:



- they opposed capitalism, having personally experienced its harsh effects

- they were used as a justification for opposing capitalism as an evil system of production.

Anti-capitalist animosity and actions were directed towards the three features of industrial capitalism previously pointed out, namely:

- General interest vs. self interest

The celebration of self-interest as an expression of a society of rational, responsible individuals and leading to universal well being was in accord with a cosmopolitan outlook coming out of the enlightenment vision. However, it was neither suitable nor plausible in a world of nation states such as 19th century Europe was becoming.

The interest of individuals (self-interest) was deemed inherently selfish and had to be replaced by the general interest. This general interest was expressed and represented by an entity at a higher level. This entity was the nation state.

In the wake of Rousseau and the ideologues of the French Revolution, the general interest (or public/national interest) came to be held, under the nation state, as the acceptable objective to which the behaviour of everybody had to conform.

This was a necessary move by the ruling élites and their associates. In fact, parasitic strata cannot champion the idea of self-interest, unlike productive individuals. The interest of parasitic strata is in open opposition and collision with the genuine long-term interests of everybody. For this reason they have to use the expression "general interest" that is so vague and generic that it can be filled with any contents.

Middle-men, especially if they obtain their means of sustenance or wealth by representing people (politicians), influencing people (journalists) or supposedly providing administrative services to people (bureaucrats), are practically obliged to speak of general or national or public interest, inventing a fictional abstraction that goes beyond the reality of single individuals made of flesh and blood [1852, Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, section III and

section VII]. This fabricated "general" interest, dissociated from the interest of each and every one, would not stand even a moment of serious examination, if it were not for the emotional captivation of the sound of words (public, national) that seem so morally lofty and attractive but are in fact empty and deceptive.

The formation and consolidation of nation states, instead of the emergence of a world community, had another negative effect.

- National protectionism vs. international trade

The development of world trade that seemed such an irresistible and unstoppable tendency of industrial capitalism found a stumbling block in the nation states of Europe and in the federal state of America.

Certainly protectionism had stronger roots than we are led to believe from the writing of Marx and from his celebration of a world market; in this respect, reading the works of Frédéric Bastiat would be more instructive [1845-1850, Frédéric Bastiat]. Parliament in England was protectionist until 1846 (abolition of the *Corn Laws* that imposed duties on the import of corn). In France the government kept the protectionist barriers until 1860 when the Anglo-French Commercial Treaty was signed. The political élites in Germany, while establishing an internal free-trade area with the Zollverein (1834) upheld protectionism with regard to foreign countries, finding theoretical support in the writings of Friedrich List [1841, Friedrich List]. The USA Congress introduced a protectionist tariff in 1816 extending it to cover more goods in 1824, before lowering it in 1846 and in 1857 [1997, Bruce Bartlett].

So, it is only towards the middle of the 19th century, and especially after the Anglo-French Commercial Treaty of 1860 and the ensuing growth of international commerce, that free trade seemed to have an assured future.

But, in 1879 the German government, under pressure from big business, introduced a protectionist tariff, soon followed by the French (1881 and 1892) and Italian (1887) governments. In the United States the Congress passed the McKinley tariff in 1890. From then onwards it was the introduction, everywhere, of all sorts of further

restrictions to the movement of goods (tariffs, quotas) and people (passports, quotas and immigration visas). The world was to become a series of territorial cages within which every state attributed to itself unlimited sovereignty to restrain, repel, repress everybody and everything.

The mix of competition and cooperation of industrial capitalism that was meant to transform the entire world, improving the conditions (material, cultural) of all individuals, was obliterated and in its place was put the struggle for political supremacy and world domination between nation states (imperialism, militarism). This would result in two World Wars and many other obscene state crimes and follies.

National firms, national trade unions and national politicians got united against free trade, in the name of the regulated market. Under this very appealing expression we can find, quite often, restrictive monopolistic practices introduced to favour some national producers to the detriment of all consumers.

- Stable occupation vs. technological innovation

The introduction of power-looms and other mechanical devices was opposed by those who thought (rightly or wrongly) that these machines were depriving them of their jobs and livelihood. The most famous revolt against the machines was that promoted by Ned Ludd in the districts of Nottinghamshire, Lancashire, Cheshire and Yorkshire between 1811 and 1816, with the smashing of power looms. The opponents of the new devices did not realize the benefits that their introduction would bring in no time, namely:

- an increase in production that would reduce the cost of goods to the advantage of a very large number of people, that is to all of them as consumers;

- the possibility of satisfying further needs, given the saving made in the purchase of cheaper goods; this would lead to the application of human strength and skill in other sectors of production, raising the level of employment.

This is, in any case, what has happened since the introduction of the first tool. This is also part of what constitutes the civilizing

process that frees human beings from toiling incessantly just to get the bare means of subsistence and allows time for the cultivation of all sorts of enjoyable activities.

If, at a certain moment in time, we had opted for stable employment, we would still be using wax candles produced by good craftsmen, a postal service relying on messengers on horseback, and heating based on chimneys regularly cleaned by young chimneysweeps. All these occupations have been eliminated by the advancement of technology; nevertheless, more and better jobs have emerged for the satisfaction of further needs, in a better way.

On the basis of these three points (general interest, national protectionism and stable occupation), anti-capitalist attitudes and behaviours have spread and taken over almost everywhere in the world. As a consequence, the features representing the inner core of capitalism (self interest, international trade, technological development) have either disappeared or have been greatly altered while only the outer shell (factories and large material production) has survived.

There would be nothing remarkable nor regrettable in this occurrence if the new reality represented progress, leading to a society beyond capitalism.

Instead, the success of this kind of anti-capitalism led straight to the re-establishment of a previous form of socio-economic organization: mercantilism. Given the fact that technology had progressed and the power of the nation states had increased with respect to the time of the original mercantilism (mid 16th to mid 18th century), this new, but not so new, system of socio-economic organization is known under the name of neo-mercantilism.

Anti-capitalism as neo-mercantilism triumphed from Russia to Italy, from Germany to the USA, and finally took root also in England, the last bastion of veritable capitalism.

The names under which neo-mercantilism established itself are different (communism, fascism, the new deal, the welfare state) as well as the symbols and institutional forms of its dominance; but all of them shared the same opposition to the core aspects of capitalism,

that is the unfettered freedom to produce (*laissez-faire*) and to trade (*laissez-passer*), and implemented the same or similar measures (regulated market, national protectionism, etc.) with the same or similar messages (capitalism as the law of the jungle, the state as an indispensable and provident father, the defence of national interest as an absolute priority, etc.).

The year 1883, the very same in which the major exponent of anti-capitalism as post-capitalism died (Karl Marx), saw the birth of the major exponent of anti-capitalism as neo-mercantilism (John Maynard Keynes).

With Keynes modern economic thinking has been turned upside down. Adam Smith depicted a new system of wealth production based on the division of labour and the invisible hand of the free market, a system he characterized in opposition to mercantilism and that would be later defined as capitalism. Paradoxically, in the 20th century, some scholars have qualified the new mercantilism, based like the previous one on the heavy hand of the state continuously and pervasively interfering in the economy, as modern or late capitalism.

The definition of the problem and the depiction of the situation being very important factors in the advancement of knowledge, we need to examine further the transformation of "capitalism" in order to ascertain if there are substantial reasons to accept the thesis of its continuing permanence in the form of late-capitalism or if it would be more profitable, for the progress of science, to refer to capitalism as a late (i.e. dead) phenomenon, that is definitively gone and passed away.

### **The transformation of capitalism**

The portrait of capitalism sketched on the basis of the classic texts of Smith, Ricardo, Marx, highlighted the following aspects:

- Industrial capital, that is machines and materials employed in production, replacing land as the most important factor of production;

- Free competition amongst small and medium size producers replacing restrictive and monopolistic practices, legacy of the medieval guilds;
- New actors (inventors and industrialists) coming from many sectors of society and becoming promoters of new industrial plans, replacing the interventionist and dirigist mercantilist state.

Surveying and analyzing the situation towards the end of the 19th century we discover that, with respect to this classic image, almost everything was changing, and not just because of technological progress. Regarding the core aspects of capitalism, the following transformations were taking place:

1. Capital: from industry to finance

What is meant by "capital" is central to the entire problem of defining capitalism and assessing its existence or disappearance. According to Adam Smith, money can be considered part of the circulating capital but only insofar as it activates production and facilitates trade.

"Money, ... the great wheel of circulation, the great instrument of commerce, like all other instruments of trade ... makes no part of the revenue of the society to which it belongs." [1776, Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Book II, Chapter 2]

This means that money (gold and silver coins) is not the foundation of the wealth of a country, but production and trade are. Spain was extremely rich in gold and silver but it was in England that the Industrial Revolution took place because it was there that the real capital emerged, that is new technological devices invented by capable and persevering individuals and put to productive use by perspicacious and determined newcomers (e.g. Richard Arkwright, the barber). This dynamics brought to life the capitalistic mode of production.

Industry produces wealth but wealth does not necessarily

produce industry. As a matter of fact, the more wealth gets accumulated in a few hands, the more it is likely to be channelled towards parasitic ventures, through which money is supposed to generate further money, without even passing through the stage of production of commodities.

The shift from industry (factories) to finance (banks) is a long process started with the establishment of the Bank of England in 1694 out of the "purely political motives ... of financing the war of William of Orange with Louis XIV." [1919-1920, Max Weber, *General Economic History*]. It continued with the establishment by Napoleon of the Bank of France (1800) to facilitate the allocation of government bonds, in other words to finance the state machine.

But it is at the end of the 19th century, when the nation states of Europe promote their imperialistic adventures and set themselves up on the path that will lead to total war amongst themselves, that financial interests take the upper hand under the direction and protection of the state.

The interlocking of state and finance had already been highlighted by Marx in the middle of the 19th century with reference to the French situation:

"By the aristocracy of finance must here be understood not merely the great loan promoters and speculators in public funds, in regard to whom it is immediately obvious that their interests coincide with the interests of the state power. All modern finance, the whole of the banking business, is interwoven in the closest fashion with public credit." [1852, Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*]

In 1902 John Hobson qualifies financial interests as "the governor of the imperial engine" and identifies the main reason behind imperialism in the need to find areas for financial investments. The thesis linking imperialism with the acquisition of new markets for growing industrial production is discarded on the basis of statistical data of international trade that show the very low commercial interchange between industrialized and non-industrialized countries, due to the

weak purchasing power of the colonized subjects. [1902, John Hobson, *Imperialism. A study*]

Lenin follows Hobson in his analysis of Imperialism as arising from financial interests. Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, is characterized as "capitalism in transition, or more precisely as moribund capitalism" [1916, Vladimir I. Lenin]. After this phase, the war amongst the capitalistic states will pave the way for the final collapse of the capitalist system.

In *The State and Revolution* Lenin defines the age of imperialism as

"the period of financial capital, of gigantic capitalist monopolies, the stage when monopoly capitalism becomes State monopoly capitalism." [1917, Vladimir I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*]

What seems not very clear in the analyses of these authors or, in some cases, in the popularizers of their ideas, is the fact that what they call financial capitalism or state capitalism is something that has nothing to do, for good or bad, with the original spirit and practice of capitalism. What has happened is not just a simple shift of stress but also a total change of attitudes and actors. Under the new scenario industrial producers are still operative, but in the background, subservient to so called financiers whose investments abroad are political moves dictated by state interests and are seldom profitable for the industry as a whole. In the word of an English historian, the yardstick is "Power, not Profit." [1956, A. J. P. Taylor]

At this point, the original notion of capital as industrial resources is, in actual fact, totally lost and capital is identified with money or with any other monetary support. Having reached this stage, we are then completely outside the economic conception of Adam Smith, and we are back to the mercantilist outlook. Once we reach this stage, we are completely out of Adam Smith's conception and have reverted to the mercantilist view of what constitutes the true wealth of a nation, identified then with the accumulated amount of gold and silver monetary pieces, and now in financial gains from bank deposits and interests from loans to the state.



## 2. Market: from competition to consolidation

Capitalism has often been characterized as the existence of a permanent competition between producers, a competition so fierce and heated as to be disruptive of human relations. This image has often been more an invention of sensational journalists and unsympathetic writers than a reality. In actual fact, the tendency to control the market or, to put it more nicely, to share it in an amicable way, has always been present amongst producers. [1776, Adam Smith, Book I, chapter X]

Whatever the case, during the second half of the 19th century the competition amongst firms relented and was replaced, in some cases, by agreements related to the level of selling prices and to the amount of allowed production.

Within a social climate characterized by freedom, economic agreements are not so terribly worrying for three reasons:

- Price fixing. These deals amongst producers are all the time subject to collapse, especially if a firm has good reasons (e.g. new technological devices, better products, cash exigencies, etc.) to believe that it can gain by a revival of competition.
- Foreign competition. There are always producers that are not included in the agreement, usually "foreign" firms that can disrupt the reality based on the pact.
- Potential new entrants. There is always the possibility of new entrants in the field if the agreement leads to exorbitant profits due to the fixing of high prices or of limits to production.

In any case, these pacts are always subject to change and, in actual fact, they never last for long. They produce a mix of competition and cooperation within/between producers and between producers and consumers, in a dynamic search for equilibrium.

Unfortunately, this dynamic received a deadly blow with the

entrance into the economic arena of a new player, acting as a bull in a china shop: the state.

With the pretext of regulating and supporting the national economy and social life, the state has intervened in each one of the aspects, previously listed, affecting producers and consumers. What ensued can be summarized as follows.

- Price fixing. In order to stop firms from agreeing about the fixing of prices, the Sherman Act (1890) in the USA made this practice illegal. The result was the carrying out of a series of mergers and the birth of conglomerates replacing what were before many distinct firms. The new conglomerates did not require any agreement as the pricing was now, in many cases, under the full control of a single huge enterprise or was prompted by the leader in the field. All perfectly legal but also all perfectly absurd from the point of view of the interests of the consumers. In fact, monopolistic practices had been encouraged and sanctioned with the seal and blessing of the state.

- Foreign competition. During the second half of the 19th century the formation of a world market seemed an unstoppable trend. Unfortunately it was more an aspiration by some traders and producers than a reality with strong foundations. When problems arose, instead of solving them with the application of energy and ingenuity, the members of the confederations of national industries and of the workers' trade-unions found, almost everywhere, an easy way out by demanding the protection of the state through the introduction of import tariffs and import quotas. This eliminated or greatly reduced, in many cases, foreign competition and increased the monopolistic power of the big national firms, all courtesy of the nation state. The strict causal relationship between the introduction of tariffs and the growth of monopolies was so evident that the president of the American Sugar Refining Company openly admitted in front of the Industrial Commission of the American Congress that the Dingley Tariff (1897) in the USA was "the mother of all trusts." [1965, Peter d'A. Jones, *The Consumer Society. A History of American Capitalism*]

- Potential new entrants. The factories that emerged out of the Industrial Revolution were engaged in the production of material goods. The further expansion of the economy led to attributing a relevant place to the production of so-called public services (transport, gas, electricity, etc.) and the exploitation of natural resources (especially oil). In all these cases the state intervened, arrogating to itself monopolistic ownership and administration or granting to a company exclusive rights of exploitation, and getting a cut through taxation. These undertakings have been put in the (fake) category of natural monopolies or labelled industries of national interest; for these reasons, necessarily, they had to be placed under the (supposedly) benevolent control of the nation state, with the total exclusion of potential new entrants. Not only was competition in those sectors forbidden by law but even production for self-consumption was outlawed (e.g. electricity in Italy). A further state policy encouraging consolidation to the detriment of competition can be found in the buying practices of the American Federal State which usually favoured big companies. For instance, in the course of the Second World War, ten big firms received one-third of all war orders; during the same span of time 500,000 small firms went out of business in the USA. [1965, Peter d'A. Jones, *The Consumer Society. A History of American Capitalism*]

### 3. Actors: from individuals to institutions

One of the main protagonists of the Industrial Revolution was the merchant entrepreneur who, frequently, became an industrial entrepreneur.

In order to expand the business, the entrepreneurs, very often, needed further resources to introduce new machines and to buy more raw materials.

This, amongst other factors, led to a radical change concerning those who were to play the central role in the business. After the original capitalist phase in which the industrial entrepreneur started the business with more or less limited resources and ran it directly, we pass to a second phase in which industrialists are assisted and, in some cases, replaced by managers and technicians and controlled, in

their dealings, by financial institutions and big shareholders. In the third book of *Das Kapital* Marx refers to the appearance of the large joint stock companies and writes of the separation between management and ownership. This marks the decline in importance of the individual capitalist and prompts Marx to declare that it

"signifies the suppression of the capitalistic mode of production within the same capitalistic mode of production." [1894, Karl Marx]

Confirming the same trend, Thorstein Veblen, at the beginning of the 20th century, highlights the contrast, within American society, between the engineer on one side and the financial speculator on the other. [1904, Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of Business Enterprise*]

In Europe, the increasing importance in the economy of the state and the financial institutions (banks, stock exchange) meant that the main actions and decisions moved from the industrial centres of Manchester and Lyon, to the political and financial centres of London and Paris.

The bigger role played by the state and the state related institutions was welcomed by many scholars. For instance, the members of the American Economic Association at the time of its foundation (1885) declared:

"We regard the state as an agency whose positive assistance is one of the indispensable conditions of human progress." [1965, Peter d'A. Jones]

The first half of the 20th century, with the long World Wars and the long depression in-between, witnessed the subjugation of individuals and the coming to dominance of the institutions, especially the state. During this phase, which continued for quite a while also after the War, everything gradually came under the supervision of the state functionaries and of the bureaucratic apparatus even in the country considered the most capitalistic of all, the USA.

These aspects of financial institutions and monopolistic concen-

trations were feeding each other because those financial institutions had a lot to gain from gigantic mergers. It has been estimated that the stock market profits of the underwriting syndicate that promoted the merger of U. S. Steel in 1901 gained the incredible figure of \$62,500,000. [1965, Peter d'A. Jones]

As for the larger role played by big bodies, above all the state, it was approved or accepted by progressives and conservatives, revolutionaries and reactionaries (whatever the meaning attributed to these terms); they all saw in it either a necessary step towards socialism or the only way to oppose it.

Otto von Bismarck and Rudolf Hilferding could be seen as two of the exponents of these different perspectives, united only by the desire to attribute to the state an increasing power.

This being the situation, it is fair to say that we have come a long way from the economic environment and outlook presented by Adam Smith. In this so-called "capitalism," in which the state occupies such an important place, the sound of the machines (capital) and the voices of the entrepreneurs (capitalists) seem like a far distant tinkle. Certainly, neither the capital nor the capitalists occupy centre stage as in the writings of Smith, Ricardo and Marx.

In short, the reality has been totally changed but the vocabulary, for mysterious or mischievous reasons, has remained impermeable to change. Neo-mercantilism is called modern capitalism and liberals (in the USA) are those who advocate state intervention and oppose *laissez-faire*. Because of this misuse of the terms, many do not perceive the colossal shift that has taken place and that is not reflected in the common language. This would not be a problem were it not for the fact that the words we use shape and show the way we think. And improper/irrelevant terms lead straight to fallacious arguments.

### **The decline of capitalism**

While all these transformations were taking place, which would not only disfigure the essential features of capitalism as portrayed by

classic economists, but also dissolve it altogether, the only aspect that seemed to survive was technological change. Nevertheless, this did not have the lively pace of earlier times because capitalism had started declining even while industry was still the economic core of society.

The decline of capitalism, prelude to its extinction, was the result of its shortcomings with respect to the dominating forces of political and financial power. These shortcomings appear as:

- Loss of energy

Capitalism emerges in opposition to the strictures and regulations of the feudal world and the mercantilist practices of the state. However, paradoxically, the very success of the capitalistic enterprise is at the root of a loss of energy whose cause can be summed up with a single word: bureaucratization. Two phenomena are at the basis of the bureaucratization of the firm:

- Size increase. The growth in dimensions up to a certain point is conducive to higher productivity; it makes it necessary to introduce better standard procedures through new working actors for managing, controlling and administering the business. It is only the continuous senseless expansion, not based on rational productive reasons, that leads to the formation of industrial pachyderms, clumsy in acting and slow in reacting.

- State intrusion. The state which, during the period of the ascent of capitalism, kept or was kept aside from interfering (at least in England), came back with a vengeance, finding in the huge enterprises the best agent from which to drain resources (taxation) and on which to lay burdens (regulations) in order to ingratiate the people (the electorate) especially in the age of mass democracy.

The negative effects of the bureaucratization of the firms resulting from size increase and state intrusion reach their highest points in the government bailouts (state rescue) or buy-out (state acquisition) that would not even be contemplated if we were indeed living in a capitalist society.

Each further growth in size, while giving the appearance of strength, in actual fact weakens the original animal spirit of the capi-

talistic entrepreneurs to the point that they have no more energy to rebel against state interference and the state imposition of burdens, useless or senseless as they might be. And this is at the basis of another loss.

- Loss of hope

The loss of energy results in a loss of hope and confidence that anything could ever be achieved not only against the state but also without the state.

When this conviction takes hold of the mind of people (entrepreneurs, workers) there is an inevitable run for shelter and security, which means putting each and every company under the protective wings of the state. The early capitalists, who had once (1751) replied to Colbert's inquiry about what the state could do for them, with the words: "laissez-nous faire," had, in the course of time, lost more and more the hope of being capable of acting without the assistance of the state. They were no longer alarmed or even annoyed by state intervention; they demanded it in the form of protection from foreign competition (tariffs), of aid to production (easy credit), of assistance to employees (redundancy funds) and so on and so forth.

This tendency to call for the help of the state has been present and alive all the time, especially in some countries where the spirit of industrial capitalism and liberalism has never been very strong (e.g. France, Italy). But, when it even affected England during the 20th century, it was a very powerful sign that an era had come to a close.

The decline of capitalism, manifested in a loss of energy and hope, could have been stopped if it had not been compounded by a further loss.

- Loss of ideas

Especially during the 20th century, research and development of new devices and new products has been concentrated in the centres and laboratories of big industrial firms; but, despite huge investments there, the truly revolutionary, profit-making discoveries (from an economic and social point of view) have been the result of single individuals detached from big business, sometimes working from home.

This could appear astonishing for those brought up to believe in large organizations as highly productive and creative entities.

In actual fact, the industrial business community of the 20th century not only is not behind (stimulating, financing) many major discoveries but, sometimes, is not even aware that a major technological breakthrough has been achieved and that it could have a very profitable use.

This happened, for instance, with the photocopier for which no businessman seemed to envisage any possible use. It happened again with the computer for which the major producer (IBM) did not see any possible personal use. And so the computer revolution was promoted and led by individuals tinkering in their garages or assembling components in their homes. The union of computer and communication has been the product of students willing to solve the problem of sending information (as in the case of the modem) or lone individuals in search of better ways to share knowledge (Tim Berners-Lee and the birth of the World Wide Web) [1999, Tim Berners-Lee, *Weaving the Web*]. An exemplary case of lack of ideas is represented again by what was once the biggest manufacturer of computers in the world (IBM), asking a drop-out student (a certain Bill Gates) for an operating system for its machines. And we can continue with the Linux operating system, used nowadays by most servers in the world, whose origin has nothing to do whatsoever with big business; or the MP3 revolution (sharing music files on a peer-to-peer basis) that has taken the whole music industry totally by surprise, made possible by a teenager (Shawn Fanning) writing the code for an application called *Napster*. The strange fact is not that these things have happened but that many still consider the "capitalistic" firms as the centre of creativity and the engine of progress as it was the case in the heyday of the Industrial Revolution. This has not been the case for quite a while and so it is really strange to keep calling them capitalistic firms.

All the discussion so far leads to the simple remark that to define this desert of energies, hopes, and ideas as capitalism is a nonsense on a par with the characterization of the horror of Stalinism as social-



ism. They are both wicked deceptions that cannot be accepted by any well-informed rational human being, and certainly not by the scientific community.

During the course of the 20th century the original capitalistic entrepreneurs not only adapted to the bureaucratic mentality but they adopted it in the conduct of their business, mixing trade and business with politics, intermingling with the state power and lobbying it for protection and favours.

The capitalistic spirit was no more.

### **The overcoming of capitalism**

The visible scenario in front of us is still, in large part, that of industries, markets and technological change, as in the times of capitalism.

But, just as the vision of a vast plain should not lead us to the belief that the earth is flat, so the existence of industries, markets and machines should not be taken as proof that capitalism is still alive and well.

In fact, if we delve deeper in our analysis, we find that, for most of the 20th century, the economic scenario presented the following realities:

- Industries: state owned, state controlled, state regulated industries. State dirigism appears in the form of the New Deal (USA), the Commissariat général du Plan (France), the National Economic Development Council (United Kingdom), the Ministero del Bilancio e della Programmazione Economica (Italy), just to name a few episodes and entities.
- Markets: national markets, protected markets, regulated markets. The idea of free world exchanges, with people from all continents taking part as producers and consumers, is on no one's agenda, whatever their political label (conservative, old liberal, social democrat, etc.).

- Technology: development of technology for military purposes; stringent protection of new inventions through patents; the relatively slow pace of the introduction and diffusion of new technological improvements during the first half of the 20th century.

Even in the presence of these transformations, there are intellectuals, politicians, journalists, opinion makers who keep using the term capitalism as if nothing substantial has happened; or have added a series of qualifications to make it still acceptable. Paradoxical definitions like "state capitalism" or "monopoly capitalism" have been introduced, and this shows how strong might be the power of familiar words and long cherished beliefs.

Deep-rooted ideas die hard, as Keynes remarked in one of his most quoted phrases: "Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist." [1936, John Maynard Keynes]

Presently, many (if not most) people are still the slaves of the ideas of some extinct economist (most likely Keynes' ideas). For instance, many still believe that Keynes economic recipes, providing theoretical justification for state intervention, saved capitalism from certain ruin. It would be more correct and appropriate to say that Keynes put the last nail in the coffin of capitalism and gave respectability to an economic system that, for lack of a better and more original name, has been called neo-mercantilism.

However, there have also been some scholars who realized that important changes had taken place and that we were moving towards a social and economic system substantially different from the previous one.

John Maynard Keynes himself, in 1926 wrote an essay with the revealing title: *The end of laissez-faire* [1926, John Maynard Keynes] in which, after describing the ascent and decline of the concept and the practice of "laissez-faire", declared himself to be in favour of the regulating intervention of institutions above the individual. In another essay titled *National self-sufficiency* he plainly advo-

cated a move towards national autarchy and economic isolationism, and so basically against "laissez-passer" [1933, John Maynard Keynes].

These two factors (*laissez-faire, laissez-passer*) being the qualifying traits differentiating capitalism from mercantilism, it is then not very clear how their disappearance could be combined with the survival of capitalism. This did not worry Keynes because, for him,

"the decadent international but individualistic capitalism in the hands of which we found ourselves after the War is not a success. It is not intelligent, it is not beautiful, it is not just, it is not virtuous - and it doesn't deliver the goods. In short, we dislike it and we are beginning to despise it." [1933, John Maynard Keynes]

So, it is not surprising that, with these mental attitudes he suggested recommendations that contributed so much to the extinction of capitalism.

In-between the two World Wars, when in many countries, both advanced and backward, the state had taken over the economy, some observers tried to define the new reality by using terms such as "bureaucratic collectivism" [1939, Bruno Rizzi] or "managerial society" [1941, James Burnham] to designate a society dominated by the state and by the new class of managers and bureaucrats.

After the war, other analyses emerged that used the terms of "industrial society" [1962, Raymond Aron] and "industrial state" [1967, John Kenneth Galbraith] to describe the form of production and social organization of advanced societies.

There have also been essays and articles presenting or predicting a convergence between so called socialist and capitalist economies under the benevolent power of a regulating state.

Some other analyses have been critical of the role of the state, denouncing the appearance of a *New Class* of privileged strata using state power in order to exploit the masses and to keep them in a position of subordination [1957, Milovan Djilas]; or warning about the increasing role played by the military-industrial complex within the

state, seeing in it a menace to the system of political accountability. [1961, Dwight D. Eisenhower]

What all these texts do, in various ways, is to highlight the importance assumed by the state as producer, employer, distributor and destroyer of resources. [1966, Paul A. Baran and Paul M. Sweezy; 1967, *Report from Iron Mountain*; 1985, Seymour Melman]

The modern state, in the words of Marx and Engels "is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." [1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels]

This might have been the case in the middle of the 19th century, but the reality of the 20th century does not offer many reasons to confirm this belief.

Since the time of the Communist Manifesto the state has become, more and more, an entity of its own, subordinate to none, running its own affairs, undoubtedly aware of the existence of other powerful actors but certainly not at the beck and call of any (internal) power or (national) exigency other than its own survival. To this aim, prices have been fixed or left floating, tariffs have been introduced or abolished, firms have been nationalized or de-nationalized, all in the interest of the state and the state coffers, i.e. the ruling political élite and the associated strata.

Two classic examples of the supremacy of political power with respect to economic exigencies and influences can be taken from the history of the steel industry in the USA.

On April 6, 1962, the U.S. Steel Company decided to raise base steel prices about 3.5 per cent. President John Fitzgerald Kennedy (Democratic Party) thought differently and opposed the move, perhaps because he had to repay the Trade Unions for their support in his election. A week later, the top executives of the U.S. Steel Company cancelled the price increase.

Forty years later, in March 2002, another American President, George W. Bush jr, belonging to a different party (Republican Party), decided to raise protective tariffs (up to 30%) concerning the same sector of industry (steel). To a casual observer it might appear that everything has changed, that business is again in command, but it

would be a superficial reading of the event. In actual fact, the new ruler needs to curry favour with the electorate in key states. The election to the Congress of representatives of his own party and his future re-election chances have taken absolute precedence over decisions based on rational long-term productive improvements and technological developments. The eye is on the electoral conundrum and not on the economic doldrums. The economy as a whole is, once again, subservient to politics.

The fallacious belief that the state is nothing else than the "comité d'affaires" of the capitalistic bourgeoisie has been shattered by real occurrences over and over again. Unfortunately, fallacies have a life of their own, independent of actual events, especially if they are supported and propagated by strong vested interests. And nothing is so strong as the interest of the state in making people assume that they live in a free society with a free market, that every economic perturbation and unpleasant event derives from the ubiquitous and ever present capitalism and that, for this very reason, the state must exist in order to protect everybody.

Nevertheless, not everybody has been misled about the survival of capitalism.

Joseph Schumpeter, writing in 1946 with reference to the growing antagonism between the Soviet Union and the USA, forecasting what will be called the "cold war" stressed that

"it is a war between a supposedly socialist and a supposedly capitalist country." [1947, J. A. Schumpeter]

In 1951 there appeared a book in which is sketched the economic and political history of England since 1880, bearing the revealing title *The Decline and Fall of British Capitalism* [1951, Keith Hutchinson].

In 1959 Adolf A. Berle, who knew about capitalism from having produced in 1932 a classic book on the reality of the modern corporation, wrote in a large circulation magazine:

"In America it [capitalism] stopped existing somewhere between 1920 and 1930." [Adolf Berle in 1975, Richard T. Gill]

If this is the case, and many experiences and data incline us to believe so, we should draw some lessons helping us to take a clear position concerning attitudes and actions in the pro-capitalism - anti-capitalism controversy.

### **Beyond capitalism and anti-capitalism**

As previously pointed out, capitalism is a word that came into large use at the beginning of the 20th century to designate a society characterized by two main aspects:

- the dominance of capital (in the form of mechanical productive instruments)
- the dominance of capitalists (in the role of individual entrepreneurs).

It would have been possible to do without the term capitalism as more appropriate words could have been used to qualify that period as, for instance, industrialism, industrial system, industrial society, age of mechanization.

Later on, when both these dominating aspects declined and politics, by means of the state, took over, a new label should have been thought up to designate the new period.

In fact, after mercantilism was replaced by capitalism (industrialism), it happened that, especially in the course of the 20th century, capitalism was superseded by an updated version of mercantilism characterized by:

- Financialism : the state replaces the wealthy individuals as the main provider of liquidity for starting or expanding a business. This happens through the control of credit via national financial institutions subordinated to a state central bank.

- Dirigism: the state shapes (or tries to shape) the decisions of producers and consumers, owning and managing directly large chunks of industry and deciding how and where to allocate resources.
- Welfarism: the state fills the role played by the Church as the benevolent, compassionate father whom everybody asks for protection, assistance, favours.

These and other transformations have altered capitalism so deeply and widely that, with reference to the reality of the 20th century, we should drop the use of the term capitalism because it is no longer serviceable, no matter how many qualifications we add beyond that of industrial capitalism (e.g. financial capitalism, state capitalism, monopolistic capitalism, etc.). In actual fact, while industrial and capitalism are two terms that might complement each other, all the others are in stark contradiction with it, at least if we take the classic writings of Smith, Ricardo and Marx as our benchmark. If we consider capital, i.e. the means of production in the form of machines (fixed capital) and raw materials (circulating capital), as a core factor of the capitalistic mode of production, it is then quite odd to use the same word capital, as in the expression "financial capital," to qualify, for instance, purely speculative ventures where no production is involved; the expression is then a perversion in the use of the language because it gives the idea that we are still within the area of capitalism (i.e. industrialism), only of a different nature. Besides that, this so called financial capitalism is, intrinsically, so full of state regulations and so dominated by monopolistic political cliques as to make a mockery of the freedom and competition attributed to original capitalism.

Maybe it is our destiny to be able to qualify an age only in retrospect, when it has elapsed or is on the way out; our time is no exception, contrary to what some might think. [1970, Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol editors, *Capitalism Today*, Introduction]

However, given the fact that, throughout the 20th century, the

main actor on the social and economic scene was the state, it seems appropriate to call that period the age of statism.

Statism is a socio-economic system characterized by:

- state power. The state advocates and concentrates the power of intervention in all spheres of life;
- state income. The state absorbs a consistently large chunk of resources. In many European countries tax revenues are up to 40 - 50% of gross domestic product [source: OECD 2002].
- state employment. The state fixes and supervises the rules governing work and becomes (in itself and through related sectors) the biggest single employer.

Those in favour and those against capitalism seem not to have realized, or to want to realize, that a more powerful entity, the state, has replaced the capitalistic entrepreneur and so the capitalistic system of relations.

It is then evident that advocates and adversaries of capitalism are both labouring under a misapprehension because they support or fight something that is not there any longer.

Let us point out briefly why their contention is mistimed and misplaced.

- Advocates of capitalism: missing the point

To the supporters of capitalism it should be pointed out that

- the era of mechanical production has given way to automatic production performed by electronic devices;
- the provision of services has become relatively more important than the production of goods and this reduces the importance of the capitalist class (the traders-entrepreneurs).

In other words, the time in which machinery (i.e. industrial capital) dominated, with the captain of industry at the helm, is gone. This does not mean that we no longer have industrial goods or industrial entrepreneurs; it means only that they are not any longer the main features of the current age. [1973, Daniel Bell; 1980, Alvin Toffler]



As for freedom and competition (exchange, enterprise, risk-taking, etc.), they are elements common to all ages and to all people in various measures; it is neither appropriate nor accurate to characterize them as exclusively capitalistic features. They are not likely to disappear as long as there is hope and the will to advance the human adventure.

- Adversaries of capitalism: missing the target

The opponents of capitalism similarly refer to realities that were central a long time ago, for good or ill. For instance:

- the importance (at least in theory) still attributed to the ownership of the material means of production reveals a view that does not take into consideration the profound legal and social changes affecting workers, managers, shareholders [1932, Adolf A. Berle jr. and Gardiner C. Means].

- the importance attributed to a physically strong workforce, as in the factory organized according to the precepts of Taylorism, discounts the role played in the modern economy by information and knowledge, and the profound changes in the relations of production brought about by the necessity of a generalized use of information and mastery of appropriate knowledge [1988, Shoshana Zuboff]. This reduces progressively the role and weight of the industrial working class and puts an end to its function of social regeneration as the largest and most relevant component of society.

Those in favour and those against capitalism are then stuck in a very uncomfortable and un-scientific position. They do not want to say good-bye to the capitalist class and to the working class but this is what has happened in the most advanced social experiences. They do not see the decline in importance that has affected both the "capital" and the "economy." This trend is likely to continue once production is everywhere performed by automatic devices, poverty is reduced and cultural/ecological issues (i.e. healthy living in a healthy environment) become everywhere more important and pressing than material/economic matters (i.e. the provision of the means of sustenance).

History is characterized by the appearance of new realities and for this reason historians invent labels to define periods with a

specific way of life and thinking. The fact that for the last one hundred years we got stuck with the word capitalism while statism was coming to full dominance, means only that historians are either out of touch with reality (lack of perception) or low on ideas (lack of vision). And this has very negative effects as far as personal and social progress is concerned.

In fact, and here we come to the central point of this essay, it is in favour or against statism that the debate and the action should have focused. And it should be focused on it especially now that statism also is on the wane and new phenomena are appearing that transcend the limited horizon imposed by the state. It is time to start the debate now, leaving behind those who are still stubbornly refusing to let their brain function and are still formulating obsolete ideas using obsolete words.

Amongst the many short stories O. Henry wrote, there is one about two individuals divided by a total enmity because something has recently happened between them, or at least this is what we are led to think. At the end of the tale we discover that the reason for the dispute was something that had taken place many years earlier, but the two individuals were living as if the clock had stopped at that moment and all their ideas and actions were still geared towards that event.

Maybe the same has happened to the supporters and the opponents of capitalism. They live in a world of their own, long disappeared, fabricating plots that have neither actual relevance to nor positive repercussion upon current reality.

We should leave dead ideas buried with the dead.

We have, each day, a new life to build.

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One of the aims of this essay is to stimulate the reading (or re-reading) of some classic texts and less known documents, with a fresh and open mind. In square brackets the translations used for writing this text.

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## LIBERALISM / ANTILIBERALISM

The antecedents of the idea  
The formulation of the idea  
The actuation of the idea  
The practical limitations of the idea  
The missed development of the idea  
The actual diversion of the idea  
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Beyond liberalism and antiliberalism  
References



### The antecedents of the idea

**T**here are, in history, some recurrent themes and problems that manifest themselves, generally, whenever some basic traits of human nature are put under stress. They emerge, for instance, when the domineering and exploitative individual tries

to impose himself and encounters the opposition of other human beings who are strong enough to contest these pretences, which they see as unreasonable.

In the past we had, for example, attempts at imposing:

- Monopolies of power. The most famous case and the first one to be highly documented refers to the struggle between the King of England, trying to affirm his discretionary supremacy and the English Barons wanting to restrict that power. The results was the issuing, in 1215, of a document under the name of *Magna Charta Libertatum*, in which the Barons succeeded in safeguarding their rights and privileges against the arbitrary power of the King and, in so doing, introduced clauses protecting also the rights and liberties of the commoners.

- Monopolies of wealth. Whilst rebelling against a central power above of them, the feudal masters tried, in their turn, to impose their power of exploitation on all those living in the territory they controlled, aiming, by that way, to enjoy a monopoly of wealth. Because of that situation, the rural people had to allocate some of their time to cultivate the fields of the master, had to transfer to him a quota of their produce, were obliged to use only the equipments of the master (mills and ovens) paying him a fee. In other words they were used as simple appendages of the land of their masters. The radical solution to avoid this condition of subjection, was, at least for the most venturesome of the rural servants, to abandon the feudal territory and to set up, somewhere, new agglomerations (free boroughs) and new activities (craft, trading). In doing so they became the forerunners of the enterprising and trading bourgeoisie.

- Monopolies of religion. The introduction of the printing press (1439) and the circulation of ideas that came with it, increased the number of literate individuals and free thinkers who found abhorrent any imposition, especially in matters of religion. An example were the Protestants who left France when Louis XIV repealed the *Edict of Nantes* (1685) that had granted them the possibility to practice their religious beliefs undisturbed. And many were those, during the age of state absolutism (16th and 17th centuries), who were arrested,

tortured and suffered death at the hand of a power that wanted to impose the same faith on all the subjects living within a specific territory.

In all these cases of rebellion we are concerned with individuals who, because of their pride (the barons), their energy (the rural servants) or their moral strength (the free thinkers), were willing to stand and fight in order to preserve and affirm their individuality.

Many of those who, in the remote past, have upheld their free-will and free-thinking aspirations against any crushing power, can be considered the predecessors of a conception (Liberalism) that will develop in the second half of the 17th century and gain momentum in the 18th and 19th centuries.

### **The formulation of the idea**

The existence of individuals rebelling against a monopolistic power is a constant datum of history, but it is only from the middle of the seventeenth century that we have the emergence of a corpus of ideas openly attributing to individuals fundamental rights, intrinsic to human nature.

This happened following the formation and strengthening of the absolutist state and the publication of the writings of thinkers like Jean Bodin (1530-1596), Robert Filmer (1588-1653) and Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) justifying the divine origin of the power of sovereigns and their position above the law, as they were seen as the source of every law.

The first step in the direction of a development of the idea of Liberalism can be found in John Locke's *First Treatise of Government* (1689) that is a precise refutation of the position asserting the divine right of kings held by Robert Filmer in his *Patriarcha* (1680).

However, it is in Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* (1689) that we find a clearer expression of what will be taken as the principles of Liberalism, namely:

- The existence of natural rights. Locke affirms that it is for the protection of these natural rights, that are antecedent to the emer-

gence of any government, that the individuals associate and form a society, called civil or political, in which the rulers act on the basis of the consent and for the benefit of the people.

- The existence of property rights. The most relevant natural right is the right of property, by which term (property from Latin *proprius* = what is one's own) Locke means "life, liberty and estate." As for "estate," that is material property, this comes into being when someone, exerting a personal effort, mixes his labour with natural resources and is rewarded by appropriating and enjoying the fruits of his activity.

Another important point that is associated with Liberalism is the advocacy of religious tolerance. Here again Locke expressed quite advanced ideas in *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689). Contrary to Thomas Hobbes, Locke thought that a proliferation of religions and their free practice, one next to the other, was not detrimental to order in a civil society, because religion and civil government operate in different spheres. With regard to this Locke wrote "I esteem it above all things necessary to distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion and to settle the just bounds that lie between the one and the other." (*A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 1689)

The development of liberal ideas took place also in France through the writings of Montesquieu (1689-1755) and Voltaire (1694-1778) and the activities of those thinkers known as *les philosophes*, some of which collaborated in the redaction of *L'Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (1751-1772) under the direction of Diderot (1713-1784) and d'Alembert (1717-1783).

The aim of all those that, in Europe, shared the values of the Enlightenment was to oppose absolutism and obscurantism represented by the alliance between the state, enjoying a power perceived as unlimited and arbitrary, and the Catholic Church, seen as an obstacle to the development of science and the free expression of ideas.

To restrain the power of the absolutist state, Montesquieu advocated in *De l'esprit des lois* (1748) the separation of state powers (execu-

tive, legislative, judiciary) by differentiating the functions and introducing reciprocal controls and counterbalancing weights.

As to the obscurantism of the hierarchies of the Catholic Church and their meddling in everybody's life, Voltaire gave free rein to his sarcasm and witticism in various writings and expressed his ideas in favour of religious tolerance in his *Traité sur la tolérance* (1763).

With reference to social and economic life, during the course of the 18th century a group of thinkers known as the Physiocrats stressed the existence in the social relations of a "natural order" that didn't need state interference in order to function for the benefits of individuals. This is the same concept that will be taken up by Adam Smith (1723-1790) in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) under the appealing image of the "invisible hand."

If we add to these various themes and thinkers, the work of Wilhelm von Humbolt (1767-1835) on the limits to state action, and the writings of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) praising the Enlightenment and the élan towards cosmopolitanism, we have the main structural components of what is called Liberalism.

During the 19th century all these ideas were further developed, especially in France and in England, by thinkers and activists such as Frédéric Bastiat (1801-1850), Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), Richard Cobden (1804-1865) with the *Anti-Corn Law League* and their fight against protectionism. At a certain point, towards the middle of the 19th century, it seemed that the development of international free trade would introduce an era of constant social and economic progress and harmonious living, with the definitive abolition of wars. If such a scenario had materialised, it would have represented the implementation of freedom and the triumph of Liberalism.

Before examining why this did not happen, it is necessary to go very briefly through some historical events in which we find the practical implementation of some of the ideas put forward by the thinkers and writers previously mentioned

### **The actuation of the idea**

The advancement of liberal ideas and the retreat of state absolutism is marked by three revolutions:

- The English Revolution (1642-1651) and the Glorious Revolution (1688). The first was a civil war between Parliamentarians (the supporters of the Parliament) and Royalists (the supporters of king Charles I and Charles II). It ended with the trial and execution of Charles I and the escape and exile of his son Charles II. The Glorious Revolution saw the overthrow of king James II and the accession to the throne of his daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange. But, apart from these changes, what is more relevant is that this proved to be the end of absolute power exercised by the kings. This was replaced by the power of Parliament. The clearest signs of this transformation were the introduction by the Parliament of the Habeas Corpus Act (1679) and of the Bill of Rights (1689). These Acts circumscribed the power of the Crown, highlighted the rights of Parliament in matters of legislation, taxation and administration of justice, affirmed the freedom of speech and declared that no one could be prosecuted before a court of justice if unlawfully detained. These measures contributed to make the English institutions amongst the most tolerant and liberal in Europe.

- The American Revolution (1775-1783). The inhabitants of the thirteen colonies, that broke their allegiance to the British Crown in order to form the United States of America, were the most luminous example of liberal principles of self-determination and the expression of natural rights. These principles were condensed, first of all, in the battle cry "no taxation without representation" and then exposed, in a very pregnant way, in the Declaration of Independence (1776). In the preamble to the Declaration are contained the basic ideas of the liberal outlook: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the

governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

In 1787 the Constitution of the United States was ratified by the assemblies of each state of the Union. In the Constitution are expressed the basic principles guiding the relations between the federal government, the states and the people. In 1789, ten amendments were added to the Constitution by the House of Representatives; they were later on ratified by the states and came into effect in December 1791, representing the Bill of Rights that protects the natural rights (liberties and property) of every individual. This completed the liberal structure that gave birth to the political entity known as the United States of America.

- The French Revolution (1789-1799). On the basis of the ideas and aspiration of the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment and following the example of the American Revolution, the people of France, especially those of Paris, took part from 1789 onwards, in a radical transformation of their political and social structure. The main aim was the overcoming of feudal strictures and privileges and the safeguarding of the freedom of the individual against any abuse and exploitation by the powers of the Ancien Régime (the Crown, the Church, the Aristocracy).

These aspirations found expression in the *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* - *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (1789) adopted by the *Assemblée Nationale Constituante* - *National Constituent Assembly* on the basis of a draft text presented by the Marquis de Lafayette. In it we find condensed the main liberal ideas: the upholding of universal natural rights of "liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression." (art. 2); the principle of sovereignty residing in the nation, that is the people (art. 3); the supremacy of the law against arbitrary rules (art. 5); the separation of powers (art. 16).

An even stronger document in defence of individual freedom and

against the oppression of illegitimate power was the *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du citoyen de 1793* - *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of 1793*.

The theoretical and practical foundations and aspirations expressed by these three revolutions can be summed up in the words of the famous motto of the French Revolution, which has a universal value and appeal: *Liberté - Egalité – Fraternité*.

The liberal aspects of these revolutions can be found in three factors that were intended to operate against any type of monopoly (of power, of wealth, of religion):

- The separation amongst the state powers (executive, legislative, judiciary)
- The separation between state and economic activities (*laissez-faire, laissez-passer*)
- The separation between state and religious institutions (religious tolerance).

However, from the start, a gap appeared between intentions and declarations on one side and implementations and realizations on the other. Some of the problems were probably due to the inability of the individuals to overcome difficulties and obstacles in a creative way and some might be ascribed directly to the limitations contained in the original formulations of the liberal concept.

### **The practical limitations of the idea**

The liberal ideas that were behind the political revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries produced, in the 19th century, liberal movements and liberal parties that took part, all over Europe, in political struggles for national independence and for the introduction of constitutional charters.

In Spain, a group called *Liberales* fought, at the beginning of the 19th century, for the implementations of the articles contained in the Constitution of 1812, advocating, amongst other measures, universal male suffrage, national sovereignty, constitutional monarchy and the freedom of the press.



These were also the demands of the liberals that participated in the political upheavals of 1848 throughout Europe, aiming at the introduction of written constitutions and the end of state absolutism. The path was open also for the establishment of two large states in Italy (1861) and Germany (1871). Independence movements were active in Poland, Greece, Hungary, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, Montenegro, resulting, in some cases, in the recognition of new independent states at the Congress of Berlin (1878)

The accession of liberal politicians to power, especially in England with Gladstone, towards the middle of the 19th century, marked the acceptance and implementation of the classic ideas of liberal thinkers of previous centuries. However, it was this very successful political outcome that led liberalism astray, in the vain pursuit of the contradictory idea of a "liberal state" based on the monopoly of territorial sovereignty.

In fact, the occupation of state positions by self-proclaimed liberal politicians, led to a re-evaluation of the role of the state and to the continuous enlargement of its sphere of intervention, which was contrary to the basic principles of the original liberalism. It is then appropriate to say that "once liberals came to power, state building was among their primary objectives." (Adrian Shubert, *The Liberal State*, in, Encyclopedia of Social History, 2001)

So, the absolutist state in which the king and the aristocracy had, in theory, arbitrary powers, that was, in practice, limited by conventional restraints, and an ineffectual role of social intervention, started to be replaced by the liberal state in which the wealthy strata, elected to the Parliament, intervened increasingly in the social and economic life of the people, grouped and governed as a homogenized compound called "the Nation."

It was in the course of the 19th century that, confronted with the reality of their own power, many liberals retraced from the lofty ideals of universal freedom and limited state power contained in the message of classical liberalism and, step by step, went for a new version marked by:

- National liberalism. Once the struggle for independence was

completed, the liberals considered that the fight for freedom was over and that it was time to assert themselves as national leaders of powerful nation states on the world scene. Within a short span of time, many liberal politicians, sometimes in alliance with conservative politicians, embraced imperialism in the name of the Nation.

- Democratic liberalism. The stress on the individual and on personal freedom gave way to democratic suffrage (progressively extended) and to the power of the majority represented in Parliament. Likewise any other politicians, the liberals went with the tide in the direction of a mass society in which the role of the individual is steadily reduced to that of a cog within and under the state machine.

- Political liberalism. The fact of occupying political positions of power within the state led liberal politicians to place a stress on the political aspects of freedom (electoral representation, checks and balances) belittling the freedom from an invasive state power in the social and economic spheres. In fact, economic freedom was detached from political freedom and almost dropped and liberalism was reduced to the freedom of political choice between constitutional parties willing to govern individuals.

For many liberal politicians in a liberal state based on national and democratic ideas, freedom came to be identified with the freedom reserved to:

- Their race. Many powerful pages in favour of freedom were written by individuals (like Thomas Jefferson and John C. Calhoun) who owned slaves and were in favour of slavery. For them liberalism meant essentially the freedom of the white man and the defence of the white race and of white minorities (as in the case of the fight against the English Crown).

- Their country. Liberal politicians quickly abandoned any idea of cosmopolitanism present in the liberal outlook and supported their country even if that meant aggression and suppression of liberty for the inhabitants of other regions of the earth. Many liberals (exemplary is the case of John Stuart Mill) accepted the thesis of the civilizing mission of the white man and, once in power, behave often like any other expansionist ruler.

- Their class. Liberals were generally very cultivated individuals that belonged to the aristocratic or wealthy strata of society. Once they became also the political ruling élite in the national Parliament, they used the power of the state in order to protect and promote their interests, presented as the interests of the entire society.

In other words, liberalism, intended as liberal parties controlling the levers of state power, was, in the end, not much different from any other conception and movement. The difference was only in the social strata (the wealthy and powerful) that were now putting themselves under the banner of liberalism. For the rest, liberals had the same aim of using state power for controlling and manipulating the public and for extracting favours and revenues. No wonder then that, during the last decades of the 19th century, in

“Vienna, Berlin, Rome, and elsewhere ... a galaxy of Liberals – bankers, entrepreneurs, public officials, cabinet ministers – were charged with such unpleasant things as fraud, speculation, bribery, and conspiracy.” (Carlton J. H. Hayes, *A Generation of Materialism, 1871-1900*, 1941)

However, it should be added that these limitations and distortions to the concept and practice of liberalism were not shared by all liberals. In fact, some of them remained highly critical of the social arrangements that followed the overcoming of the *Ancien Régime* and some of them presented ideas that, if accepted and implemented, could have addressed liberalism towards a very different and promising path.

### **The missed development of the idea**

The spur motivating the classic liberals was, as previously pointed out, the overcoming of monopolies (of power, wealth and religion) and the affirmation of the autonomous tolerant individual. In the sphere of production and commerce this aspiration was condensed in the famous expression of *laissez-faire laissez-passer*.

The expansion of freedom, that characterized especially England between the 18th and the 19th century, made possible a massive growth in the means of production (capital) that was later on qualified with the name of the Industrial Revolution.

On the Continent, this idea that *laissez-faire laissez-passer* was the key to economic prosperity and could be also the key to social well-being was taken up by a liberal thinker by the name of Paul-Émile de Puydt (1810-1891).

What he proposed was to introduce free competition between governments within the same territory, similar to the economic competition between industries located in the same country or to different churches that exist side by side and attract faithful followers on the basis of the appeal of their message and the approval for their deeds. The implementation of this proposal, according to de Puydt, would put an end to political squabbles and economic squandering of public resources, and would allow those offering the best social services to emerge and to operate. At least, as long as they were capable and willing to offer services demanded by eager and satisfied customers.

The radical novelty of this position presented under the name of *Panarchy* (1860), can be better seen when contrasted with some basic ideas of classic liberalism, namely:

A) The idea of personal contracts in place of a social contract.

Locke (following Thomas Hobbes and followed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau) ascribes the origin of governments to the stipulation of a social contract that binds rulers and ruled to reciprocal obligations. The different stress on obligations and limitations (a stress put more on the ruled by Hobbes and more on the ruler by Locke and Rousseau) distinguishes the absolutist from the liberal vision of power. However, it is only when the social contract is replaced by personally undersigned engagements that we make a qualitative leap towards effective substantial freedom for the individual. In fact, with the social contract the individual finds himself obedient to the existing majority and in abeyance to past legacy. On the contrary, with the personal contract, the individual expresses his choices

according to what is in agreement with his/her actual or changing aspirations and necessities.

B) The idea of various competing governments in place of one sovereign government with separate counterbalancing parts.

The notion, expressed by Montesquieu and taken up by classical liberal thinkers, that the separation of powers (legislative, executive, judiciary) is the solution, granting everybody freedom from political oppression, has resulted either in a fictitious myth or in a squabbling mess. As for the fictitious myth, the actual reality is that, generally, one state power prevails over the others; as for the squabbling mess, when the various powers fight and block each other, the result is total paralysis. Much more effective appears to be the proposal to put governments (and the services provided by them) in competition and let the people decide which government and which services they are willing to finance and use. If monopolies are bad in the economic sphere, according to liberal thinking, it would be quite extraordinary if they were seen as good in the political sphere. This is the message that de Puydt wanted to convey on the basis of a clear and coherent understanding of the best liberal principles.

The path to the proposal of Panarchy by de Puydt had been prepared by the writings of a famous liberal economist, Gustave de Molinari (1819-1912), for many years the editor of the *Journal des Économistes*. In 1849 he wrote a seminal paper, *De la production de la sécurité* (On the production of security), in which he advocated something that represents the necessary conditions for the implementation of the proposal of competing governments, namely:

C) The idea of competing security agencies in place of the state police monopoly.

The vision of the state as a night watchman was first put forward with scorn, in a speech in Berlin in 1862, by Ferdinand Lassalle, a state socialist who wanted the state to be the supreme entity in the social and economic life of the masses. The expression was then taken up, with a positive twist, by liberals who intended to confine the role of the state to that of being, uniquely, the sole provider of security within a specific territory (the national territorial state). The fallacy

inherent to this position consists in the fact that, historically, no entity having the monopoly of violence has restricted his activity to the simple role of suppressing acts of aggression and maintaining peace and order.

It is, indeed, a fact, confirmed by many historical events, that those who hold the territorial monopoly of violence are put in or find themselves in the favourable and indispensable condition for:

- initiating violence (against external agents in order to obtain territorial gains);
- imposing control (upon minorities and non-conformist individuals and groups);
- extracting resources (from all the subjects inhabiting the territory).

The turn of events favouring the development of an invasive state, even when liberal ideas seemed to be on the ascendancy, has been very well documented and decried by writers like Frédéric Bastiat, Alexis de Tocqueville and Lord Acton (1834-1902).

Bastiat has conducted, especially towards the end of his brief life, a struggle against myths and illusions, the most notably being those of protectionism as the instrument for increasing national wealth and of the state as a benevolent all-providing father. In order to destroy (unfortunately unsuccessfully) any illusion that was growing around the state, Bastiat came out with what is one of the best definitions of the state: *L'état, c'est la grande fiction à travers la quelle tout le monde s'efforce de vivre aux dépens de tout le monde*. [The state is the great fiction through which everyone seeks to live at the expense of everyone else] (*L'État*, 1848)

Tocqueville expressed (1835) his worries, reiterated later on by John Stuart Mill (1859), about a possible transformation of democracy into the "tyranny of the majority," whenever the sphere reserved to the individuals became increasingly restricted.

Lord Acton made clear, more than any other, that "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely"; and that "[T]here is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it." (*Letter to Mandell Creighton*, April 5, 1887). His warnings did not receive the

attention they deserved probably because the most unpalatable aspects of the absolute state had gone and, now, the new "liberal" state was capable of presenting itself under more appealing but also more deceiving appearances.

Bastiat called this new posture of the state "philanthropic despotism" (*La Loi*, 1850) but not many shared his critical view. Certainly not many other liberals that, especially in England, were diverting liberalism towards a new path in which society, represented by the state, would receive and assume a quite substantial role.

### **The actual diversion of the idea**

The most relevant exponent of liberal thinking in England during the 19th century was John Stuart Mill. In his writings, especially *On Liberty* (1859), we find some of the best expressions of liberal principles, condensed, for instance, in the statement:

"The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it." (John Stuart Mill, 1859)

On the basis of this principle it follows that

"the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant." (John Stuart Mill, 1859)

However, alongside these very clear statements upholding personal freedom and individual autonomy, we find in Mill other formulations that can accommodate a much wider intervention of the state in promoting civilization (for instance in backward regions of the world) or human amelioration (for instance, with respect to disadvantaged strata of society).

In his *Representative Government* (1861) Mill declares that

"the proper functions of a government are not a fixed thing, but different in different states of society: much more extensive in a backward than in an advanced state." (John Stuart Mill, 1861)

This point of view opens the gate for state intervention whenever a state measure can be presented as leading to an improvement of social conditions.

It was in this way that liberalism, in England, became more and more tinged with philanthropic tendencies that were not intrinsically reproachable if they had not led, (a) domestically, to state paternalism and the invasion by the state of all fields of service provision and, (b) externally, to the acceptance and support of a supposedly "beneficent" imperialism by way of a "liberal" English state intent on a civilizing mission on the world stage.

Then, in the second half of the 19th century Liberalism was diverted towards a state interventionist approach thanks to a group of scholars based in Oxford who were attracted by the philosophy of Hegel. A major exponent of the group was the liberal philosopher Thomas H. Green (1836-1882) who, through his writings and political engagement (he was a councillor at the Oxford City Council) expounded what will be known as social liberalism.

Other exponents of social liberalism were Bernard Bosanquet (1842-1923), Leonard T. Hobhouse (1864-1929) and John H. Hobson (1858-1940).

The basic idea of these thinkers was that, in the presence of sharp inequalities and slow progress towards personal development, the task of liberalism was to stimulate society, as a whole, to intervene, by establishing democratic institutions, in order to promote measures that would facilitate the growth of individuals. To do so it was necessary to move from a negative to a positive idea of liberty, that is from a policy of abstaining and non-interference to that of a more active fostering of better social conditions.

It is fair to say that, in England at that time, and elsewhere, there



were plenty of justifications, for anyone with good intentions and a belief in personal and social justice, to intervene in order to redress past and present wrongs, committed by the ruling strata with the protection of state power. In the past, the landed gentry had appropriated (through the various *Enclosures Acts*) vast tracts of land, with the blessing and approval of a Parliament which they dominated. During the Industrial Revolution the interests of the industrialists had been highly safeguarded by the state with the prohibition of worker's associations (trade unions) fighting for better working conditions. And this was made often in the name of liberal principles of competition that the industrialists could very well discard by colluding and making tacit agreements.

Adam Smith was very aware of this situation when he wrote:

“We rarely hear, it has been said, of the combinations of masters, though frequently of those of workmen. But whoever imagines, upon this account, that masters rarely combine, is as ignorant of the world as of the subject. Masters are always and everywhere in a sort of tacit, but constant and uniform combination, not to raise the wages of labor above their actual rate.”

At the same time, when the workers combine, “masters ... never cease to call aloud for the assistance of the civil magistrate, and the rigorous execution of those laws which have been enacted with so much severity against the combination of servants, labourers, and journeymen.” (*The Wealth of Nations*, 1776, Book I, Chapter 8)

So, there were justifications for those who favoured abandoning the aloofness of a liberalism that decried any intervention by anyone, even by social groups, as an undue interference with the natural state of things. The reasons for intervention were even more cogent especially because the supposedly natural state of things, that existed at that time, was not at all natural but the result of political interventions in the past to which, it was argued, new political measures could now put a remedy.

However, a vibrant group of new liberal thinkers and activists

might have identified every obstacle erected, in the past, by any power (the state, the gentry, the industrialists, the financiers, etc.) and that still impeded the free development of individuals, and intervened to eliminate them. For instance in terms of taxation, of state expansionist policies, and freedom from imposed cultural conventions. Unfortunately, instead of strengthening the individual by freeing him from any surviving social stricture, the liberals of the Oxford school lent their voices to a strengthening of the state hoping, by that way, to help the individuals to become free.

In other words, social liberals were responsible, on the par with state socialists, for installing the state on a pedestal, or as a *deus ex machina* descending from above, to solve most if not all social problems.

This is very evident in the writings of Thomas H. Green in which the stress on individuals is always tempered and quite often suffocated by the stress on the providential power of the state. An example of this ambivalence is contained in statements like "we cannot significantly speak of freedom except with reference to individual persons" followed by the remark that

"the realization of freedom in the state can only mean the attainment of freedom by individuals through influences which the state (in the wide sense spoken of) supplies." (*Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation*, 1882)

The devaluation of the status of the individual and the attribution to the state of the social bases for human existence, is, implicitly but very clearly, revealed from the following statement:

"To ask why I am to submit to the power of the state, is to ask why I am to allow my life to be regulated by that complex of institutions without which I literally should not have a life to call my own, nor should be able to ask for justification of what I am called on to do."  
(Thomas H. Green, 1882)

From this outlook, it is not surprising that this "liberal" author expounded the belief that "education should be enforced by the state" and that "the freedom of contract ought probably to be more restricted in certain directions than is at present the case." (Thomas H. Green, 1882) This because

"[O]ur modern legislation [then] with reference to labour, and education, and health, involving as it does manifold interference with freedom of contract, is justified on the ground that it is the business of the state ... to maintain the conditions without which a free exercise of the human faculties is impossible." (*Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract*, 1861).

In practice we discover, through the words of a "liberal" thinker, that without the state there is no education, no contracts, no overall freedom.

An even more accentuated position in favour of the "Liberal State" is found in Bernard Bosanquet, where the state is seen as the highest manifestation and implementation of freedom in society. In *The Philosophical Theory of the State* (1899) he advocated the abandonment of some basic tenets of liberalism, as for instance the uniqueness of the individual, in order to merge every human being in the *mare magnum* of the general will and to effect "a transition from the private self into the great communion of reality." (1899) Bosanquet referred approvingly to Rousseau's idea of "being forced to be free," clearly by way of a superior institution, that is the state. In fact Bosanquet considered "the state as the main organ and condition of the fuller liberty." (Bernard Bosanquet, 1899)

Bosanquet's idea of personal freedom was that of a human being addressed, disciplined and animated by the supreme ethical entity: the state. For him "The State is the fly-wheel of our life." "The State is ... the individual mind writ large." (Bernard Bosanquet, 1899)

With Bosanquet, the season of liberalism which started with Locke is definitively over, at least from a theoretical point of view. We are back to the absolutism of Hobbes' Leviathan under the appar-

ently more palatable disguise of Rousseau General Will. The State is the individual or, in Bosanquet's words, we have "the identification of the State with the Real Will of the Individual." (Bernard Bosanquet, 1899)

That the new "liberal" creed was totally in favour of state dominance cannot be doubted anymore when we read that "the State, as the widest grouping whose members are effectively united by a common experience, is necessarily the one community which has absolute power to ensure, by force, if need be, at least sufficient adjustment of the claims of all other groupings to make life possible." (Bernard Bosanquet, 1899)

In sum, the Oxford Liberals did drive a nail in the coffin of classic Liberalism by expounding and successfully spreading fallacious ideas and expectations like:

- the confusion between state and society ("By the State, then, we mean Society as a unit, recognised as rightly exercising control over its members through absolute physical power." – Bernard Bosanquet, 1899);

- the illusion that state intervention brings forth personal well-being. ("The State, then, exists to promote good life." – Bernard Bosanquet, 1899).

In the presence of these types of diversions from the original conception, it is appropriate to say that, at the end of the 19th century, liberalism as an idea was practically dead. The historical events taking place in the following decades will confirm it.

### **The regrettable deviation of the idea**

When the bases for a theoretical revision of liberal thinking were twisted in a direction that justified the intervention of the state for supposedly social reasons, the road was wide open for the state playing an increasingly important role in every aspect of social life. A role actively promoted by liberal politicians, sometimes in alliance with state conservatives and state socialists.

Politics seems to be the cemetery of every conception and aspira-

tion in search of freedom and emancipation. Following the setting up of liberal parties in Europe (for instance, the Liberal Party in England in 1859) the effort of every politician was focused on making people believe that freedom was a matter of legislation and that the legislators were the indispensable vehicle for introducing measures intended to improve the life of the masses.

In an age in which an increasing number of people were admitted to the electoral suffrage and in which socialistic ideas of economic equality were in the ascendancy, all political parties, in order to gain power or to stay in power, were keen to introduce measures that satisfied the desire for social security of the masses, rather than letting the personal aspirations of individuals having their free course.

The political game became then centred on whom would be more capable of courting the favour of the people, catering for them and capturing them in a net made of cultural propaganda (reach-out) and economic patronage (hand-outs).

In this game of selling illusions and distributing favours, liberal parties and liberal politicians participated in earnest. Albert Nock decried this attitude with these scorching words:

“of all forms of political impostorship, Liberalism always seemed to me the most vicious, because the most pretentious and specious.”  
(Albert Nock, *Anarchist's Progress*, 1927)

During the nineteenth century, by way of political movements and parties, Liberalism became characterised by three aspects that altered irretrievably some of its original specific features and prepared for worst to come. These three aspects are:

- Nationalism. The national struggles for independence, for instance that of the Italian patriots, were animated and promoted by many individuals holding liberal ideas; they inspired and attracted the sympathies of many other liberals all over Europe (for instance, those of Gladstone in England). Unfortunately, in the course of time, nationalism, from being a cultural lever for producing new independent individuals with a cosmopolitan outlook, became a political

factor for the spreading of state imperialism, as every nation state started looking for its territorial aggrandisement. With reference once again to Italy, the first big move in that direction was by a liberal statesman, Giovanni Giolitti, when he started the campaign to annex Libya (1911). In this imperialistic adventure he had been preceded and would be followed by other liberal and conservative politicians in many European states (e.g. Lord Asquith in England, Jules Ferry in France, Friedrich Naumann in Germany). It is then appropriate to say that "[B]asically the new imperialism was a nationalistic phenomenon" (C. J. H. Hayes, *A Generation of Materialism*, 1941) and liberals were amongst its promoters.

- **Welfarism.** The first push towards the welfare state started in Germany with the ultra-conservative chancellor Bismarck and a series of measures introduced during the 1880s (sickness insurance in 1883, accident insurance in 1884, disability and old-age insurance in 1889). This example proved contagious especially because these were measures that could satisfy both the conservative instinct (looking after the lower strata in order to assuage the fears of the upper strata) and the progressive humanitarian instinct (caring for the lower strata in order to appease the sense of guilt of the upper strata). Liberal parties were therefore at the forefront in the introduction of all sorts of state interventions, starting from the municipal level, as preached by Robert Blatchford, a very patriotic journalist and author, in his highly popular book, *Merrie England* (1893). During the first decades of the 20th century, with the liberal politician Lloyd George we reach one of the peaks of state liberalism under the shape of the paternalistic state on the way to superintending the life of individuals, from cradle to grave.

- **Laicism.** While some outstanding liberal classic thinkers were catholic (like Lord Acton) or inspired by religious feelings (like Constant and Tocqueville), many liberal politicians saw religion as an ideology that might conflict with the full allegiance of state subjects, and considered the Church as an authority in direct competition with state power. So, both religion and the Church, had to be controlled, marginalised and, if possible, disposed of, even in the name of the

separation of powers, meaning, in reality, that the state had to become all powerful and the Church all powerless (i.e. subordinate to state power). In Germany, for instance, we had Baron Virchow, one of the founders of the liberal party (*Deutsche Fortschrittspartei*) who, in alliance with Bismarck, promoted a campaign against the Catholic Church (the cultural struggle or *Kulturkampf*) seeking, successfully, for the introduction of anti-clerical laws (1873). In France the radical Jules Ferry was instrumental in gaining, for the state, full control of education, aiming to replace the religion of the Church (catholicism) with the religion of the State (statism).

If we take into account these three aspects of the transformation of liberal thinking and practice, we can appropriately apply, to almost all "liberal" governments, what a classic liberal thinker (Piero Gobetti) wrote with reference to the socio-economic policies of an Italian liberal politician (Giovanni Giolitti), namely, that "economic liberalism becomes state socialism" and that "Giolitti had the heroic cynicism of presenting as liberal this politics of state pillage." (Piero Gobetti, *La rivoluzione liberale*, 1924)

Some liberals were quite frank about the direction they were undertaking, as in the case of the British liberal politician Sir William Harcourt who, in a speech made in 1887, famously declared "We are all socialists now." However, he should have been more accurate in the use of words, by proclaiming instead: "We, liberal politicians, are all state socialists, now". And this would have provided a more truthful picture of the manipulation of an idea into something very different from its origin and from what it could have become.

By this transformation, all the premises had been put in place for the total destruction of the liberal concept. This eventually happened with the outbreak of the First World War, a catastrophic outcome that would have been inconceivable and highly improbable in a European context of truly liberal societies, based on universal tolerance, cosmopolitanism and free world trade

### The total breakdown of the idea

The preparation for war, at the beginning of the 20th century, marked by a sharp increase in military spending by the major European states, and their subsequent rush into the fighting arena, is the clearest sign that Liberalism was already pretty extinct when the insane carnage started in August 1914.

The First War World represented the end of Liberalism as a concept and a practice based on the individual and his/her free choices in all fields of social life, and the transformation of liberalism (and every other "ism") into a tool for state power and state control.

The Anglo-Saxon world that had produced the basic ideas to which the name of Liberalism was later attributed, was again in the forefront in the elaboration of the new conception of "modern" or "progressive" liberalism that would turn upside down the ideals of the "classic" one.

The theoretical formulations of Leonard Hobhouse (*Liberalism*, 1911) and the practical measures taken by the liberal administrations of Lord Asquith and Lloyd George (Old Age Pensions, 1908; National Health Insurance Act, 1911) marked the real beginning of the welfare state in the United Kingdom.

John A. Hobson was ready to recognize this when he wrote:

"For the first time in the history of English Liberalism, leaders with a powerful support of the rank and file have committed themselves with zeal and even passionate conviction to promote a series of practical measures which, though not closely welded in their immediate purport, have the common result of increasing the powers and resources of the State for the improvement of the material and moral condition of the people." (John A. Hobson, *The Crisis of Liberalism*, 1909)

However, it was after the war that liberal thinkers and politicians abandoned definitively the basic tenets of minimum government and



*laissez-faire* in order to embrace extensive state intervention and state regulation in social and economic life.

In Italy, the philosopher Benedetto Croce, the most relevant voice of liberalism, was intent in detaching, conceptually, political freedom from economic freedom: the former considered the true mark of liberalism (i.e. political liberties as basic human rights); the latter, under the name of *liberism*, seen as a fungible if not unnecessary addition to a liberal discourse and practice. For Croce "the utopia of *laissez-faire laissez-passer* ... as panacea for social ills, was disavowed by facts." (*Storia d'Europa nel secolo decimonono*, 1932) According to him, *liberism* (economic liberalism) and protectionism were only different economic approaches, both acceptable and suitable in relation to changeable historical situations and were not at all opposing ways of thinking and acting in the economic sphere, as it was assumed by classical liberals. Croce then gave a tremendous blow to some of the ideas that were considered an indispensable part of the liberal concept. In fact, Bruce Smith, an Australian businessmen, barrister and politician had been very explicit about it when he wrote: "it is about as clear that one man cannot possibly be a 'Liberal and a Protectionist', at one and the same time" (*Liberal and Liberalism*, 1887).

To operate even more successfully this U-turn, what was needed was for a famous economist to intervene and declare the unworkability of social and economic relations without the regulatory presence of the state. In other words, to declare, as a scientific fact, that Liberalism was dead. This happened courtesy of the most famous liberal economist of the age: John Maynard Keynes.

In a series of essays of which the most famous are *The End of Laissez-Faire* (1926) and *National Self-Sufficiency* (1933), Keynes openly advocated the end of free trade and a retreat into national autarchic economies. In his major work, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936) Keynes provided the state with theoretical tools and moral justifications for an extensive intervention in the economic sphere. The state as night watchman, so derided by Lassalle, was no more, not even as a liberal illusion; in its place there was now the state as a busybody, to use the subtitle of a book (Ernest

Benn, *Modern Government*, 1936) that appeared the same year as the Keynes publication.

The final touch to the total destruction of the liberal idea of minimum state intervention was put by another liberal, William Beveridge, who produced policy Reports (*Social Insurance and Allied Services 1942*; *Full Employment in a Free Society, 1944*) that contained ideas and proposals that were implemented by the Labour Government of Clement Attlee for the setting up of the modern British Welfare State.

The influx of this new “liberal” approach was so successful that, in the United States, the word liberal became the mark of those advocating the intervention of the state in order to solve all sorts of problems.

It is then not a wild exaggeration to say that the modern interventionist state is much more a creation of liberal thinkers and liberal politician than the work of state socialists. In England the Labour party was only instrumental in embarking on a path and putting into practice ideas that liberals had already amply favoured. We could even add that the paternalistic state promoted by liberals was not what many socialist workers had in mind when they talked and fought for emancipation. In fact, the “liberal” reform of National Insurance introduced by Lloyd George was opposed by the bulk of the manual workers attracted by socialism and mutualism and suspicious of state interference, as they were already insured through their own friendly societies and voluntary insurance associations.

The main features of this new liberalism can be summed up as:

- Particularism. The nation-state with universal suffrage, parliamentary majorities and political scheming becomes, for modern liberals, the final word in social and political organization. The cosmopolitanism of the past is gone, replaced by the particularism of national interests; and even when dealing with supra-national problems through international organizations, the nation-state remains, for most liberal thinkers and activists, the main active force.

- Protectionism. The belief in the “invisible hand” and in a spontaneous harmony or adjustment of interests is gone and in its place

liberals put the regulatory state and policies protecting the national economy. In this way liberals become the advocates (especially through Keynes) of a new mercantilism.

- Paternalism. The upper strata of society that had a voice in articulating many ideas of liberalism, finally embrace paternalism in the form of the welfare state, out of deep fears of social upheaval or of benevolent attitudes of social relief. However, in so doing, they impede the process of individual self-emancipation that was one of the pillars of classic liberal thinking and acting.

To explain this total change of perspective by liberals we can perhaps refer to a growing social mood in favour of state intervention. This is indicated, for instance, by the increasing appeal of state socialist (the social-democratic and national-socialist parties) and the demise of anarchist and Marxist movements for whom, in different ways, the state belonged to the museum of antiquities, according to the colourful expression employed by Friedrich Engels (*The Origin of Family, Private Property and State*, 1884). Whatever the possible explanation, it remains nevertheless quite disheartening to see a conception, centred on the individual and on the development of his freedom and autonomy, become a movement represented by political parties that advocate the widespread intervention of a paternalistic state, in which the individual is put under state guidance and tutelage.

In contrast to this general debacle of liberalism, a very limited number of thinkers intervened, with their writings and activities, to oppose the advancement of totalitarian statism during the first half of the 20th century. They represented the ultimate attempt to salvage classic liberalism and to redirect liberalism towards new horizons.

### **The attempted rescue of the idea**

In a world dominated by intellectuals supportive of the state and state-based political parties, despite their different denominations and cultural background, some individuals emerged that attempted

to salvage liberalism through a radical critique of state socialism and a new appreciation of free activities and free exchanges.

We refer here briefly to three efforts:

- The resumption of classical liberalism. The names associated with a revival of classical liberalism are especially those of Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek. Amongst the vast production of work of von Mises it is sufficient to refer to two early publications: *Socialism* (1922) in which he intended to show the impossibility of rational economic calculation in the absence of free choices and free exchanges; *Liberalism* (1927) in which he sought to present the everlasting appeal of the classical liberal tradition. As for Hayek, classic liberalism was the framework of his seminal work, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944) that is a damning indictment of state totalitarianism. His clear message was that only self-reliant individuals and independent communities could overcome the subordination to the state that was, at that time, a quite common human condition.

- The exploration of liberal socialism. In Italy, the accession of the Fascists to state power (1922) was one of the reasons behind the anti-conventional thinking of some liberals that had been influenced by socialism and Marxism but were firmly opposed to state socialism. A relevant figure was Piero Gobetti who expounded in his *La Rivoluzione Liberale* (1924) a liberalism based on the producers, first of all the workers, stressing the fact that "il problema del movimento operaio è problema di libertà e non di uguaglianza sociale" ["the problem of the working movement is a problem of freedom and not of social equality."] (1924). A quite similar approach was taken by Carlo Rosselli in *Socialismo Liberale* (1930) where he tried to overcome the opposition between the two conceptions, of socialism and liberalism, considering one (socialism) the extension of the other (liberalism). Clearly the socialism alluded to and advocated was one based on voluntarism and federalism.

- The proposition of anarcho-capitalism. In the United States, the term liberalism having been appropriated by those favourable to state intervention, there was the need for a new characterisation to designate those opposed to state interference and dominance. During the

fifties, the economist Murray Rothbard came out with the term anarcho-capitalism and anarcho-capitalist to qualify those anarchists that were advocating free market relations and supporting legitimate claims to private property. Another term used in that respect was that of libertarianism and libertarians. Clearly, the capitalism alluded to and advocated had nothing to do with crony capitalism (corporatism) under the protection of the state.

While there are strong merits and strong arguments in support of all these three positions, they did not succeed, in the first half of the 20th century, in altering the scenario characterised by the presence of an all pervading state. Even the collapse of the totalitarian states in Europe (Germany, Italy) was due to their defeat in the Second World War rather than to reasons of moral persuasion and rational reflection on the perils of state power. That is why, with the transition to the democratic state, we still have a strong presence of state tutelage and state sovereignty. This is probably also due to some misunderstanding and limitations, strategical and tactical, contained in the positions briefly sketched above. For instance:

- Classical liberalism. The resumption of classical liberalism should have been the occasion for dropping some aspects that were incompatible with a truly free individual. For instance, the pretence by the state of having territorial monopolistic sovereignty is totally incongruous with the exercise of personal freedom (of movement, of choice amongst different protective agencies, etc.). Nevertheless, even von Mises took for granted the indispensable role of the territorial state and of its monopolistic sovereignty. In fact he wrote: "For the liberal, the state is an absolute necessity, since the most important tasks are incumbent upon it: the protection not only of private property, but also of peace, for in the absence of the latter the full benefits of private property cannot be reaped." (Ludwig von Mises, *Liberalism*, 1927)

- Liberal socialism. The originality and unconventionality of liberal socialism was also the main reason for its absolute frailty. In fact, it had to overcome the deeply entrenched and widespread conviction about the existence of an opposition between the two conceptions, of

liberalism and socialism. The battle conducted, for instance, by von Mises, a giant of liberal thinking, was directed essentially against socialism (state socialism) and not against statism (the state as the holder of a territorial monopolistic sovereignty). Moreover, the best advocates of liberalsocialism (Gobetti and Rosselli) were killed by fascist thugs when fascists were in power, and their conceptual heirs (the exponents of the *Partito d'Azione*) adapted themselves to a more modest role within the new post-fascist state.

- Anarcho-capitalism. For the advocates of anarcho-capitalism the difficulty they had to overcome consisted in the fact that the two terms, anarchism and capitalism, were (and still are) improperly associated, in the minds of too many, with the unpalatable images of disorder and exploitation. So, the first big obstacle, an almost unsurmountable one, was to make opponents understand that what was envisaged was something very different, something based on voluntary arrangements and free activities. Once this was accepted, the next step was to show that, under this label, one can fit all possible personal and social configurations, even those that had nothing to do with anarchism and capitalism, provided that they were all voluntarily chosen. However, to succeed in this cultural revolution was something extremely difficult, given that they had adopted two of the most abused terms ever posited.

These critical remarks lead us then to envisage that, what is probably required, is a more radical approach that, while preserving the best of the liberal attitudes and ideas, goes beyond liberalism and antiliberalism in order to offer a conception and a practice that is in tune with the basic exigencies of human nature and the needs, possibilities and aspirations of the human beings in the 21st century.

### **Beyond liberalism and antiliberalism**

All the conceptions, dealing with political and social organization, produced in the previous centuries, and primarily Liberalism and Socialism, have been so much distorted and misused, that it is no wonder that they have lost their genuine meaning and their true

power of attraction. When people use these terms, it is quite often as tools of propaganda and abuse in a political game.

To be called a socialist by a political foe has become equivalent to be qualified as a property thief and an unreformed thug. The same is true for the appellatives of liberal-liberalism and capitalist-capitalism. For too many people Liberalism (and the associated terms of neo-liberalism and ultra-liberalism) have become words of vilification, pointing to a conception and a practice totally disrespectful of human dignity, bent on treating individuals as usable and disposable commodities.

These purely propagandistic verbal clashes are the more absurd and laughable considering that, when socialist or liberal parties have gained state power, the differences of their policies in terms of refraining from meddling in everybody's life and practising social justice, have been negligible or non-existent.

State Liberals, sometimes even more than State Socialists, have been in the forefront of expropriating properties and repressing dissenting voices or those in the minority. To offer just an historical example, in the Kingdom of Piedmont the then liberal Prime Minister, the Count of Cavour, in the 1850's suppressed 334 convents housing 4280 monks and 1200 nuns. This measure was followed, in the new Kingdom of Italy, by a law, during the premiership of the liberal Bettino Ricasoli (1866), that dissolved the majority of religious establishment and sold their properties to the benefit of the state. The expropriation and sale of Church properties at the hand of governments controlled by liberal statesmen has been, quite often, the instrument employed to replenish state coffers and maintain the financial survival and political viability of the state.

Moreover, liberal parties fighting the cultural influence of the Church, have promoted the monopoly of the state in educational matters, as the indispensable way to succeed in shaping the minds of subjects of the state. This has been achieved, for instance in France and Spain, by suppressing schools run by religious orders (like the Jesuits) and putting all educational establishments under the control of a state ministry; a measure that Marx had strongly decried when

he affirmed that " 'Education of the people by the state' is altogether objectionable." (Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, 1875)

In the economic sector, liberals in power have implemented state protectionism and intervention, in association with state conservatives and state socialists, whenever they deemed it useful for the so-called national interest. From Joseph Chamberlain to John Maynard Keynes, major liberal politicians and intellectuals have undermined the idea of free trade and of state non intervention. In 1933 Keynes wrote, with reference to the United Kingdom: "economic internationalism embracing the free movement of capital and of loanable funds as well as of traded goods may condemn this country for a generation to come to a much lower degree of material prosperity than could be attained under a different system." (*National self-sufficiency*, 1933). The different system he suggested was protectionism. By advocating the introduction of tariffs, liberals became then the party of big business and crony (called national) capitalism.

During the 20th century, those supporting both liberalism and socialism dropped the revolutionary aspects of their theoretical vision and practical aspirations becoming, at least nominally, the ideology of the upper élite (liberalism) and of the lower strata (socialism). In actual fact, liberalism and socialism were used only as propagandistic tools by politicians battling for the control of state power. Politicians, pitting one notion against the other, destroyed the common aspects these conceptions shared in terms of protagonists (the productive individuals) and programs (against monopolies, in favour of cosmopolitanism-internationalism). Moreover, the politicians succeeded in conveying the deceitful conviction that freedom is opposed to equality; on the contrary, they are both strongly related because liberty means, first of all, the end of privileges and the holding of special powers by some individuals. This is what equality means. (Roderick T. Long, *Liberty: The Other Equality*, 2005).

After performing their tricks, state liberals embraced "freedom," which to them meant giving the upper strata free rein to exploit the workers and enjoy state-granted privileges (tariffs, patents, funding, etc.); while state socialists embraced "equality" intended by them as



homogenization and reduction of everybody, with the exception of the state ruling élite, to a lower common denominator.

Liberals have been responsible, in particular, for engendering and propagating three illusions on which they have erected the biggest of all illusions, that of a “Liberal State,” that is on a par with the “Free State” advocated by the socialists of the German Workers' party in their Gotha Programme (1875) and on which Marx put so much scorn (Karl Marx, 1875).

These illusions are:

- The democratic state: many liberal politicians believed that, replacing the divine rights of kings with popular sovereignty would put an end to arbitrary decisions and lead to people's freedom. However, state power has never been so massively unrestrained and arbitrary as in the time of the democratic state in which the masses have played a substantial, albeit subordinate, role.

- The legal state: many liberals had an irrational faith in the existence of a Constitution and in what is called the state of rights (*Rechtsstaat*, *état de droit*, *stato di diritto*). However, the fact that the state has the monopoly or the absolute supremacy in fixing the rules of social life opens the door to the introduction of all sorts of abuses and restrictions of civil rights and personal liberties, often in the name of the superior interests of society, whose reality and existence is cunningly mixed up with that of the state.

- The minimum state: classical liberals were and still are deeply attached to the idea of a minimum state, even if the fact of enjoying a territorial monopoly of violence demands from any state ruler, liberals included, a capacity of restraint from enlarging their sphere of intervention that is superhuman. The minimum monopolistic state is then both a logical absurdity and a practical impossibility.

On the basis of these considerations, it is highly recommended that efforts should be made to overcome the false contraposition between liberalism and antiliberalism that has been used only to mask the emergence and consolidation of statism (the state ideology). To go beyond liberalism and antiliberalism does not mean, at all, to abandon the ideas of freedom and personal autonomy that are, by

now, part not just of the liberal conception, but also theoretical and practical foundations of the human civilisation.

In fact, those everlasting ideas are better revived and put to work if they are freed from the ascription to any specific ideology and given universal value and applicability. We can sum them up as:

- The principle of non-aggression (let go, let alone). The basic norm of any civilised person, stressed in the works of philosophers and in religious texts alike, is the principle of non-aggression. This is also part of a rational world based on consistency (don't do to other what you don't want to be done to yourself) and reciprocity (*do ut des*).

- The practice of universal tolerance (let say, let will). From the principle of non aggression derives the practice of universal tolerance that allows for the emergence of a variety of ideas and behaviours, none of which, to be consistent with the previous principle, should threaten the well-being of anyone. Out of this, the most likely outcome is a situation of spontaneous order, with recurrent adjustments and harmonisation between individuals and communities.

- The project of voluntary communities (let choose, let try). The lack of coercion regarding any tolerant behaviour allows for the coming into being of all sorts of personal and social experiments in the form of voluntary communities competing and cooperating amongst each other. The world society becomes then a vast laboratory of social experimentation making possible a progress in the social sciences like the one that has been achieved through testing and experimentation in the physical sciences.

So, out of the best ideas and practices elaborated and implemented in the past and in the present, the process of human development and emancipation continues.

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## SOCIALISM / ANTISOCIALISM

Presentation

The theoretical and practical foundations

The theoretical and practical illusions

The theoretical and practical revisions

The French Pillars

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Some considerations on the socialist and antisocialist experiences

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Socialism and antisocialism after the war years

Socialism and antisocialism at the end of the 20th and at the dawn  
of the 21st century

Beyond socialism and antisocialism



## Presentation

**A**n ideological and material struggle between socialism and antisocialism has characterized most of the 19th and 20th centuries. This clash can also be qualified as the historical conflict between left and right wing parties, that some think to be still operating at the beginning of the 21st century.

The aim of this essay is to advance the belief that the antithesis socialism / antisocialism has been and still is, most of the time,

- theoretically illusory
- factually untenable.

The reason is that both socialist and antisocialist movements and organizations, even when fighting each other, were proposing and bringing about the same (or a very similar) program. This consisted in their taking control of the state and enlarging its role and functions, presenting it as the best way to implement their ideas of social regeneration, but actually having in mind their own preservation in power for as long as possible.

The thesis that is then put forward here is that statism, i.e. the coming to complete dominance of the state over individuals and communities, has been the implicit or explicit attitude and aim of both camps, beyond the smoke screen of their proclaimed polar differences.

The intention of this essay is to present theoretical statements and historical facts that, on both sides, pointed from the start to this common intent.

## The theoretical and practical foundations

The modern political and social debate, at least since the beginning of the 19th century, arose out of two main conceptual models of how society should be organized. They go under the name of liberalism and socialism.

It is necessary to stress from the start that they were not opposing views; the latter (socialism) should be seen as the radicalization and

extension to everybody of the premises contained in the former (liberalism). As a matter of fact, the most robust and consistent socialist thinking, that of Marx and Engels, emerges from the development, to its extreme consequences, of their liberal ideas. An academic work on Marx and Engels' early period bears precisely the title *Marx and Engels from democratic liberalism to communism*. (1958, Auguste Cornu).

The American sociologist C. Wright Mills highlighted the strict relationship between socialism and liberalism when he stated:

"What is most valuable in classic liberalism is most cogently and most fruitfully incorporated in classic Marxism."

"Karl Marx remains the thinker who has articulated most clearly - and most perilously - the basic tenets which liberalism shares."  
(1962, C. Wright Mills)

Besides a common theoretical background, liberalism and socialism share the same principal aims. Both are in favour of:

- Internationalism. The abolition of feudal obstacles to the free circulation of people and goods is to be ascribed to liberal thinking and acting. This attitude was taken up by socialism and encapsulated in powerful statements such as "The working men have no country" or in vigorous exhortations like "Proletarians of all countries, unite!" (1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels) in which clashes between nations are disposed of as pre-historical remnants.

- Pacifism. The development of free exchanges at a global level meant, in the mind of liberal thinkers, that war was practically impossible given the amplitude of common interests shared by people everywhere on earth. For the socialists, the idea that workers of different regions would fight each other was simply inconceivable. Already in the middle of the 19th century it was remarked that "national differences and antagonisms are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world-market, to similarity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto." (1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels)

- Civil Society. The general view of liberalism and socialism is based on the primacy of civil society composed of individuals who had liberated or were liberating themselves of the bondage and limitations imposed by political and economic masters belonging to a previous and fast decaying order.

These common conceptions were not always matched by common actions because differences still persisted concerning the:

- rhythm of change: slow smooth adjustments vs. quick revolutionary transformations;
- nature of change: political freedom vs. economic equality;
- agents of change: enlightened individuals vs. labouring classes;
- ways of change: self-generated order vs. openly devised planning.

If these differences, sometimes more apparent than actual, had been resolved, the emergence and evolution of a universal civil society made of free cosmopolitan individuals and autonomous networked communities might have been a matter of one or two generations.

This would have required the free and direct elaboration and implementation of a plurality of experiments in the areas of production and distribution and in the organization of social concerns and human intercourse. As a matter of fact, this is what started taking place in the creative and practical phase of liberalism and socialism. The clearance of slums, the setting up of educational centres, the industrial and communitarian enterprises of Robert Owen, were some of the signs, amongst others, of the willingness to give birth to a New Moral World that involved in practical endeavours so many liberal and socialist activists.

Unfortunately this period soon came to an end. Qualified later on, in a slightly derogatory manner, as charitable liberalism and utopian socialism, it was to be superseded by new ideas and new



actors that declared themselves to be more scientifically based and more capable of delivering better and wider-ranging results.

### **The theoretical and practical illusions**

The advance of industrialism throughout the 19th century, with larger factories replacing small workshops, started producing in the mind of some social critics the idea that industrial society was marching towards a concentration and centralization of power in the hands of a reduced group of industrialists in the different sectors of production. This small circle would push industrialization to its utmost limits, fighting each other for the control of the world market and introducing, in the process, all sorts of technological improvements that would increase production enormously.

However, the focus being totally on production, crises would regularly appear due to the impossible absorption of such a growing quantity of goods, given the exploitation of the working class and its reduced buying power.

The simultaneous presence of plenty and indigence would eventually lead to the collapse of the system and to the coming of socialism.

This dynamic is clearly portrayed in one of the most widely circulated texts of socialist literature, the *Communist Manifesto*.

In those pages, Marx and Engels set up the bases for what will be the theoretical underpinning and the practical strategy of future socialist parties. In the Manifesto they formulate a theoretical conviction, suggest practical measures of intervention and show what is bound to happen in the course of history. Unfortunately, in doing so they gave life to some illusions that would have disastrous consequences for the real advancement of socialism.

The analysis and recipes contained in the Manifesto consist of the following points:

- The subordination of political power to economic power. The conviction that political power is subservient to economic power is best captured by Marx and Engels' statement that "the executive of

the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." (1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels)

- The intervention of the state to assist in the transition to socialism. The advancement of industrialism is seen as characterized by large enterprises dominating and absorbing small ones. This process would continue up to the moment when only gigantic complexes existed, each one monopolizing a specific sector of production. At that point the state would intervene to expropriate the expropriators. Marx and Engels put forward specific measures for the transitional period that would lead to the installation of socialism. Amongst them we have:

- "Centralization of credits in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly."

- "Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State."

- "Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State."

(1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels)

- The withering away of the state and the implementation of socialism. After a brief period characterized by the dictatorship of the proletariat, when the large majority of the population assumes power and uses it to neutralize the enemies of socialism, all political power disappears following the disappearance of the classes. This means that the state is made unnecessary and goes out of business. As stated by Engels in a later work:

"the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the processes of production. The state is not 'abolished.' It dies out." (1878, Friedrich Engels)

Unfortunately, all these assumptions soon proved to be either incorrect or just wishful thinking.

- First of all, the notion that economic power was prevailing over political power was perhaps true only in England and at the

heyday of industrialism. In continental Europe (Germany, France, Italy) this has never been the case as a general rule. In reality, the trend has been in the opposite direction; since the end of the 19th century and during the course of the 20th century political power has got the upper hand in every aspect of life, prevailing against old rivals (the Church) and new challengers (the industrialists), subduing or incorporating all of them in the process.

- Secondly, while it was true that a certain increase in the size of industrial factories was partly due to historical (i.e. temporary) technological reasons, there were also political measures like protectionist tariffs and import quotas that favoured strongly industrial concentration and cartelization at a national level. Besides that, to invoke the monopolization of production under the state, as a remedy to the concentration of economic power, was a contradictory solution that would soon reveal itself to be worse than the problem it was meant to dispose of.

- Finally, the idea that the state, that is the state rulers and agents, would disappear spontaneously, of their own volition, after having concentrated in their hands all the power, was and still is total naivety, to say the least. As we will see, Marx and Engels tried to correct, in later writings, this view they held in 1848. In the Preface to the German Edition of 1872 of the Communist Manifesto they warned the readers saying that "no special stress is laid on the revolutionary measures proposed at the end of Section II. That passage would, in many respects, be very differently worded today"; after the experience of the Paris Commune "... this programme has in some details become antiquated" especially, Marx would remark elsewhere, as far as the use of the ready-made state machinery for socialist purposes is concerned.

Nevertheless, the message that the Communist Manifesto left to all future socialist activists, the one that has been repeated most often and that has remained in people's minds is:

"The proletariat will use its political supremacy ... to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State." (1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels).

On the basis of that and similar statements, socialist organizations in every country have accepted and used politics (e.g. parties' fights) and the state (state apparatus) as the appropriate way and the indispensable agent for socialism.

The idea that politics and the state could be progressive liberating forces arose and was strengthened also by the fact that some protective measures were taken by parliaments in favour of the workers (limitation of working hours, provisions for the education of children, etc.). So, it was not at all an unreasonable position to view with favourable eyes the political activity conducted within and towards the state.

Furthermore, a series of electoral laws started the process of granting universal or near-universal male suffrage in many European countries (England 1867 and 1884, Germany 1871, France 1875, Spain 1890, Belgium 1894, Norway 1898). And that gave to the labouring masses the chance to elect to the national parliament representatives who were willing to introduce further legislative measures favourable to them.

The opening of this new avenue for the emancipation of the workers and betterment of their conditions pushed even more towards the establishment and strengthening of socialist parties in most European countries. These parties appropriated the tactic used by the liberal parties (the participation in the electoral process, the promises of improvements by legislation) in courting popular favour. They were so successful that a substantial body of socialist thinkers started believing that the implementation of a socialist society could take place mainly through legislative measures that would progressively transfer power from an élite to the masses.

In order not to be left behind (as it actually happened in England), liberal parties followed suit, introducing everywhere what were deemed to be socialist measures. In other words, they copied in

their turn pieces of the agenda of the socialist parties, using the state as the tool to distribute resources and to resist further electoral advances of socialist parties.

So, while proclaiming the pre-eminence of individuals and civil society, both liberals and socialists became increasingly statist and active promoters of statism. In other words, although still talking of freedom and equality, they were in reality introducing control and uniformity.

In one of his writings, Marx warns that

"as in private life one differentiates between what a man thinks and says of himself and what he really is and does, so in historical struggles one must distinguish still more the phrases and fancies of parties from their real being and their real interests, their conception of themselves from their reality." (1852, Karl Marx)

It is, then, necessary to highlight the main points of revision of socialist and antisocialist thinking because they will appear as attitudes and actions in the daily behaviour of party members and political leaders in many countries.

### **The theoretical and practical revisions**

During the course of the 20th century socialism became national state socialism. This formula means that the socialist parties of every country adopted and promoted a program in which society became identified with the nation state and subsumed under the state apparatus, within a delimited territory.

This process of nationalization and statism of socialism (that is, nationalization of the masses and statism of society) was made possible because the most ambitious and the most unscrupulous of the socialist exponents succeeded in upholding ideas that would make it acceptable to expropriate the workers of their:

- capacity to act. The iron law of wages put forward by Ferdinand Lassalle (the leader of the German Workers' Association) depicts the

workers' fight for better salaries as an impossible undertaking, as they are bound to remain always at or to be pushed back to subsistence level because of reasons intrinsic to the dynamic of the labour market (i.e. more people offering their labour after a wage increase).

- capacity to think. The conception of revolution, put forward by Vladimir Lenin (the leader of the Bolsheviks), portrays the masses as incapable of devising a strategy for their emancipation unless they are guided by a small élite of professional revolutionaries, totally dedicated to the cause.

In order to perform such deep transformations with respect to the original socialism, two new tenets had to be introduced in the socialist conception that would revise it in fundamental ways. They were:

- economic emancipation comes from an external body: the "socialist" state
- class consciousness comes from an external agent: the "revolutionary" party.

Needless to say that these two revisions run totally counter to the classic socialist thinking which proclaims that the emancipation of the workers is a task to be accomplished by the workers themselves and it has to be done through struggles with the dominant class, in a process leading not only to material improvements but also to the emergence of the capacity of self-organization and self-government.

Once these two revisions had been accepted (consciously or unconsciously) by the socialist movement, no wonder the state and the party were considered the indispensable entities for the success of socialism. The common conviction became that socialism would be achieved the moment the "revolutionary" party got hold of state power and proclaimed the establishment of the "socialist" state. Clearly, by "socialism" was meant state socialism, or, more correctly, statism. The workers had finally become subservient, for their (supposed) emancipation, to a new master: the state and party élite.

For this reason, these two expropriations are more serious and more damning for the emancipation of the workers than any expro-

priation or deception carried out in the past by big landowners and industrialists.

With these new reformulations of socialist ideas and practices, the floodgates were open for all sorts of further betrayals of principles and for unprincipled individuals to move from so-called left to so-called right as it suited their ambition, the most famous example being that of Benito Mussolini. In reality they were showing some consistency in so far as they were all the time aiming for state power under any political label.

In each national society this course of events found a wealth of advocates and followers in (supposedly) opposite camps. It is then useful to highlight for some countries the historical itinerary that has made both socialist and antisocialist tendencies and policies converge under the sign of statism.

### **The French Pillars**

The idea that the diffusion of progress is identifiable with the growth of state power can be traced back to the French Revolution.

This Jacobean assumption and the related mental and material attitudes derive from philosophers and social critics (Morelly, Rousseau, Mably) for which the state was the summation of everything positive in society, being the representative of the general interest. For this reason, they reserved to the state an ever important role.

**Morelly** envisaged a situation where

"every citizen will be a public man, fed, maintained and employed by the public sector." ["Tout Citoyen sera homme public sustenté, entretenu et occupé aux dépens du Public."] (1755, Morelly)

#### **For Mably**

"the state owner of everything distributes to individuals the goods they need." ["l'état propriétaire de tout distribue aux particuliers les choses dont ils ont besoin."] (1768, Mably)

The socialist advocates and sympathizers of the French Revolution incorporated in their plans this vision of an omnipotent state capable of redressing torts and redistributing wealth.

For instance, **Gracchus Babeuf** (1760-1797) wanted the government in control of trade and in charge of the general distribution of work and income.

The idea that the task of solving people's problems belongs to the state, and the confidence that the state is capable of performing that function, became then part and parcel of many socialist thinkers and activists during and after the French Revolution.

**Louis Blanc** (1811-1882), qualified by Proudhon as representative of governmental socialism ["socialisme gouvernemental"] (1850, Pierre Joseph Proudhon) devised a plan according to which

"the government will be considered as the regulator of production and it will be given strong powers in order to accomplish its task."

"Within our system, the State will slowly become master of all industries." ["le gouvernement serait considéré comme le régulateur de la production, et investi, pour accomplir sa tâche d'une grande force."

"Dans notre système, l'État se rendrait maître de l'industrie peu à peu."] (1839, Louis Blanc)

Another important exponent of French socialism was **Louis-Auguste Blanqui** (1805-1881). He is considered the champion of the conquest of political power by a small group of revolutionaries who would implement the dictatorship of the proletariat, confiscating the properties of the Church and of wealthy families and installing the State as the educator of the masses. (1869-1870, Auguste Blanqui)

From the beginning then, French socialists were truly set on the path of statism, seeing in the state the essential means for their success and for the achievement of their vision of socialism.

This being the case, it is no accident that, mainly with reference to the French experience, Marx started revising his views on the state, previously expressed in the Communist Manifesto (1848).

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* he stigmatized



"... that peculiar malady, which since 1848 has ranged all over the Continent, parliamentary cretinism which holds those infected by it fast in an imaginary world and robs them of all sense, all memory, all understanding of the rude external world." (1852, Karl Marx).

Marx realized that the French socialists were falling prey to the illusion that socialism was a social and personal liberation that could be achieved through legislation and state intervention. Those affected by parliamentary cretinism (socialists and liberals amongst them) were presenting the tactical tools for gaining political success and ascendancy over the masses as strategic instruments for people's emancipation.

This appeared openly in the French experience. The French, through Napoleon III, gave an original contribution to modern politics when they showed how to use the state in order to gain the support of the people, ensnaring and corrupting them in an entanglement of large prebends and petty favours. It is from this perspective that must be seen the first measures of state social insurance introduced in France under Napoleon III with the laws of 1850 and 1868; they were, more than anything else, a state policy against revolutionary upheavals.

Analysing the coming to power of Napoleon III, Marx modified also his previous conception concerning the place and role held by the state in society, from one of subservience to one of interpenetration with the economic élite. He wrote:

"it is precisely with the maintenance of that extensive state machine in its numerous ramifications that the material interests of the French bourgeoisie are interwoven in the closest fashion. Here it finds posts for its surplus population and makes up in the form of state salaries for what it cannot pocket in the form of profit, interest, rents and honorariums." (1852, Karl Marx)

In this new image the state is not any longer a useful toy, now at

the disposal of the industrial bourgeoisie, to be appropriated later on by the proletariat for the transition to socialism, but an

"appalling parasitic body, which enmeshes the body of French society and chokes all its pores" with "its enormous bureaucratic and military organization, with its vast and ingenious state machinery, with a host of officials numbering half a million, besides an army of another half a million." (1852, Karl Marx)

This view will lead to the conviction, expressed after the experience of the Commune (1870), that

"the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes." (1871, Karl Marx)

Historical analysis, especially of the civil war in France and the defeat of the Paris Commune, pushed Marx to declare:

"At the same pace at which the progress of modern industry developed, widened, intensified the class antagonism between capital and labour, State power assumed more and more the character of the national power of capital over labour, of a public force organized for social enslavement, of an engine of class despotism. After every revolution marking a progressive phase in the class struggle, the purely repressive character of State power stands out in bolder and bolder relief." "State power, apparently soaring high above society, was at the same time itself the greatest scandal of that society and the very hotbed of all its corruptions." (1871, Karl Marx)

In his maturity, Marx expressed very forcefully the view that the state had transformed itself from a neutral subservient body to a parasitic imposing one, but this position has been ignored by later scholars and political activists, presumably because it did not fit with their state oriented agenda.

In any case, according to Marx, what the Commune made clear was the necessity, from the start of a revolution, of

"destroying the two greatest sources of expenditure - the standing army and state functionarism." (1871, Karl Marx)

With this statement, the idea of using the state in the phase of transition to socialism is practically put aside and replaced by the necessity of immediately getting rid of it. In fact, once the army and the bureaucracy have been suppressed, it is difficult to see what would be left of the state.

Underlining this exigency, Marx seems to have foreseen what was going to happen, more and more, in France (like in any other country) during the following decades, with the engagement of all parties, socialists and antisocialists alike, in the search for state positions, state employment, state protection.

Some years later an anti-conventional observer like Georges Sorel noticed this attitude intrinsic to all parties, and its development also within the socialist organization, declaring:

"The party has for aim, in every country and in every period, the conquest of state power in order to use it to foster the interests of the party and of its allies. Until recently, the Marxists taught, instead, that they wanted to suppress the state. Things have certainly changed once electoral successes have shown to the socialist leaders that the occupation of power offers considerable advantages." ["Le parti a pour objet, dans tous les pays et dans tous les temps, de conquérir l'État et de l'utiliser au mieux des intérêts du parti et de ses alliés. Jusqu'à ces dernières années, les marxistes enseignaient, au contraire, qu'ils voulaient supprimer l'État. Les choses ont naturellement changé d'aspect lorsque les succès électoraux ont conduit les chefs socialistes à trouver que la possession du pouvoir offre de grands avantages."] (1908, Georges Sorel)

In simple terms and very forcefully, Sorel continues by describing

what is happening to socialism once it has been taken up and monopolized by a party aiming, like any other party, at the conquest of state power:

"In order to understand the transformation that has taken place in socialist thinking, it is necessary to examine the composition of the modern state. It is a body of intellectuals which enjoy privileges and who possess so-called political means to defend itself against the attacks from other circles of intellectuals aiming in their turn to profit from public offices. The parties are formed for gaining these employments and they do not differ from the State. The statement expressed by Marx in the Communist Manifesto : "All previous social movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities" could be reformulated by stating that all our political crises consist of replacing some intellectuals by other intellectuals; for this reason they always result in the maintenance of the state and, sometimes, even in its strengthening, increasing the number of those interested in its preservation." ["Pour bien comprendre la transformation qui s'est opérée dans la pensée socialiste, il faut examiner ce qu'est la composition de l'État moderne. C'est un corps d'intellectuels qui est investi de privilèges et qui possède des moyens dits politiques pour se défendre contre les attaques que lui livrent d'autres groupes d'intellectuels avides de posséder les profits des emplois publics. Les partis se constituent pour faire la conquête de ces emplois et ils sont analogues à l'État. On pourrait donc préciser la thèse que Marx a posée dans le *Manifeste communiste* : "Tous les mouvements sociaux jusqu'ici, dit-il, ont été accomplis par des minorités au profit de minorités"; nous dirions que toutes nos crises politiques consistent dans le remplacement d'intellectuels par d'autres intellectuels; elles ont donc toujours pour résultat de maintenir l'État, et parfois même de le renforcer, en augmentant le nombre des co-intéressés."] (1908, Georges Sorel)

The reality has confirmed Sorel's analysis. The state in France, in some respects more and earlier than elsewhere, has become the

battlefield of parties, all aiming at state power, manipulating and buying the support of the masses.

As previously pointed out, Napoleon III was a forerunner and a master in this game. One of his disciples, who would greatly outdo his teacher, was the then Prussian Ambassador to Paris, Otto von Bismarck, who discovered and learned there the rudiments of state intervention in view of capturing the favour of the people.

It is then to the German experience that we turn as one of the best examples of the striking similarity of the socialist/antisocialist positions and their substantial equivalence as statism.

### **The German Experience**

The French Revolution exerted a strong influence on many German thinkers. Amongst them, Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, whose system and method of reasoning would have a wide and deep intellectual impact on advocates of socialism. Through the French Revolution (in its Jacobean phase) and Hegel's ideas (in the chair of philosophy at Berlin) the foundation of socialism as statism were theoretically (even if not openly) established.

For Hegel the state is:

"the actuality of the ethical idea" ; the "supreme duty [of the individual] is to be a member of the state." (1821, W. F. Hegel).

This overvaluation of the state is a common thread that, throughout German history, links socialists and antisocialists alike.

A case in point is represented by Johan Karl Rodbertus, "a conservative monarchist [who] was also a votary of a certain type of state socialism that was acceptable to a large sector of the public." (1954, Joseph A. Schumpeter). Rodbertus advocated the intervention of the state for improving the conditions of the workers who, otherwise, left to themselves, would be incapable of claiming their share of the increase in production.

The central figure in the development of the conception of

socialism as statism was Ferdinand Lassalle. His major idea (shared with Rodbertus) was the so-called "iron law of wages." According to Lassalle, there is an unavoidable tendency to keep wages at the level of bare subsistence due to the competition amongst the workers; in fact, a rise in salary would have only the effect of attracting more people to work, inevitably depressing the wages back to the previous level of subsistence. The operation of this law makes necessary the introduction of an agent, external to the working class, which can bring about economic measures favourable to the workers. This agent is the state that becomes then the engine for the advancement of a supposed socialism.

Lassalle's frame of mind is very state-oriented; he saw himself as the interlocutor and the *alter ego* of Bismarck, in a competition to gain popular support and achieve state power.

After the death of Lassalle (1864), the two main branches of the German socialist movement convened at Gotha in 1875 and gave birth to the Social-democratic Party of Germany (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland*). The program that came out from that Congress was of clear Lassallean stamp and so it was under the sign of statism.

In his *Critique of the Gotha programme* Marx mocked these statist inclinations that equated socialism with a national struggle for political (i.e. state) power.

"Lassalle, in opposition to the Communist Manifesto and to all earlier socialism, conceived the workers' movement from the narrowest national standpoint." (1875, Karl Marx).

Because of this, Marx remarks that

"the internationalism of the programme falls infinitely short even of the Free Trade Party." (1875, Karl Marx)

With reference to the programme's aim of a Free State, Marx stresses that

"it is by no means the aim of the workers, who have got rid of the narrow mentality of humble subjects, to set the state free. In the German Empire the 'state' is almost as 'free' as in Russia. Freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it, and today, too, the forms of state are more free or less free to the extent that they restrict the 'freedom' of the state." (1875, Karl Marx)

Marx criticizes also the domineering role assigned, in the program, to the state in matters of education:

" 'Education of the people by the state' is altogether objectionable." "Government and Church should rather be equally excluded from any influence on the school." (1875, Karl Marx)

The statist inclination of the Gotha program prompts Marx to declare:

"The German workers' party - at least if it adopts the programme - shows that its socialist ideas are not even skin-deep; in that, instead of treating existing society as the basis of the existing state (or of the future state in the case of future society), it treats the state rather as an independent entity that possesses its own intellectual, ethical and libertarian bases." (1875, Karl Marx)

In conclusion, according to Marx,

"the whole programme ... is tainted through and through by the Lassallean sect's servile belief in the state." "Instead of arising from the revolutionary process of transformation of society, the 'socialist organization of the labour' 'arises' from the 'state aid' that the state gives to the producers' co-operative societies and which the state, not the workers 'calls into being.' It is worthy of Lassalle's imagination that with state loans one can build a new society just as well as a new railway." (1875, Karl Marx).

If proclaimed advocates of socialism and presumed followers of Marxism had properly examined Marx's position, perhaps many absurdities and ambiguities would have been avoided. Unfortunately, statism as socialism was presented as the only practical and sensible option, taken on board first of all by the intellectuals and, later on, by the masses.

It cannot be said that it was not politically rewarding. The electoral appeal of the new Social-democratic Party was so strong to convince Bismarck of the necessity to introduce, with the support of the National Liberal Party, Anti-Socialist laws (1878) that banned socialist meetings and publications. The socialist/antisocialist struggle for capturing the support of the masses in order to gain control of the state had started in earnest.

The following year (1879) the policy of free trade was abandoned with the support of some National Liberal representatives. During the 1880s the German Government under Bismarck introduced a series of social measures that were highly regarded and, subsequently, much imitated abroad. Amongst them: sickness insurance (1883), accident insurance (1884), disability and old-age insurance (1889).

What all this reveals is that Liberals and Conservatives had, by then, understood very well that the growing weight of the masses in the political and economic life of the country required using the state as a provident father in order to keep some unruly children reasonably satisfied and, overall, under state tutelage and state control. If this meant enlarging the sphere of intervention of the state, liberals and conservatives did not hesitate to take that step even if it ran counter to their proclaimed principles.

When the Anti-Socialist Laws were repealed in 1890, the road was open for the Social-democratic Party to participate, on equal terms, in the statist game and to become a political and electoral powerhouse. In every election from 1890 to 1912, the Social-democratic Party increased its share of vote (from 1,427,298 to 4,250,401) and the socialist electorate was repaid with a consolidation of the welfare state. By 1913 "15 million Germans had sickness insurance, 28 million



had accident insurance, and 1 million received pensions." [2001, Adrian Shubert]

The enthusiasm for the state and the transformation of socialism into statism had already prompted Engels to remark, in the preface to the third edition of *The Civil War in France* dated 18 March 1891, that

"it is precisely in Germany that the superstitious belief in the state has been carried over from philosophy into the general consciousness of the bourgeoisie and even many workers. According to the teaching of the philosophers, the state is the 'realization of the idea', or the Kingdom of God on earth ... . And from this there follows a superstitious reverence for the state and everything related to the state, a superstitious reverence which takes root all the more easily since people are accustomed from childhood to take it for granted that the affairs and interests common to society as a whole could not be carried through and safeguarded otherwise than as in the past, i.e. by means of the state and its bureaucracy." (1891, Friedrich Engels)

And Engels continues his analysis declaring in very clear terms for those who want to listen, that

"the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another, in the democratic republic no less than in the monarchy. And at best the state is an evil inherited by the proletariat after its victory in the struggle for class supremacy; the victorious proletariat, just like the Commune, will be compelled to cut off the worst sides of the evil until such time as a generation which has grown up in the new, free social conditions is capable of throwing away the entire lumber of the state on the scrap heap." (1891, Friedrich Engels)

This passage is all the more remarkable for having been written in 1891, when the German Social-democratic Party was busy reformulating socialism as statism, i.e. presenting the state as the necessary instrument for introducing and managing socialism. The intellectual

tone of the party was set by, amongst others, Gustav Schmoller (exponent of the *Kathedersozialisten* or socialists of the chair) who qualified the state as "the sublime ethical institution in history," and Adolf Wagner who formulated the law of the expansion of the state in relation to the progress of civilization.

The social-democratic party had become so well integrated in the state and had identified itself so much with the state and the statism conception that it should not have come as a shock to anyone the fact that the parliamentary group of the party voted, almost unanimously, for the war credits.

The German experience shows very clearly the contradictions in which the socialists plunge themselves once the statist option is taken. It shows also the vacuity of the socialism/antisocialism alternative once statism has been assumed as the basic platform of all parties.

The perfect identification of socialism with statism came with the foundation in 1919 of the German Workers' Party by Anton Drexler, a Munich locksmith, and of which a certain Adolf Hitler became a member almost from the start (party card n°7). In 1921 it changed its name to the *National-Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (National Socialist German Workers' Party) and passed under the guidance of the ex-corporal Adolf Hitler.

In the meantime, while the national socialists were training and preparing themselves for the occupation of state power, minds and hearts were still under the influence of an experience assumed by some sectors of the socialist movement as an example to follow: the Russian revolution.

### **The Russian Example**

The Russian Revolution of November 1917 was portrayed by protagonists and sympathisers as heralding a new hope and era for socialists all over the world, after the betrayal of the German social-democratic party which had gone over to the camp of nationalism and militarism.

Some of the premises of the revolution seemed to bode well for the future, namely the anti-war stance of the masses and the anti-state views expressed by its major protagonist, Vladimir Ilich Lenin in one of his most celebrated texts written just on the eve of the November revolution.

In early July 1917, Lenin left Russia for Finland following a warrant by the Russian Ministry of the Interior of the Kerensky government for his arrest as a German agent. In Finland, during the summer, he wrote *The State and Revolution*.

The main convictions expressed in this text are that:

- "every state is a special force for the suppression of the oppressed class. Consequently, every state is un-free and non-popular";
- "the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible ... without the destruction of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class." (1917, Vladimir Lenin)

Once this apparatus has been destroyed, it is replaced by the dictatorship of the proletariat for the short time needed to overcome and definitively

"suppress the resistance of the exploiters" who want to carry on with their exploitation "in the selfish interest of an insignificant minority against the vast majority of the people." (1917, Vladimir Lenin)

The dictatorship of the proletariat, in the words of Lenin and along the lines of Marx and Engels, is nothing else than the temporary dominion of the previously exploited majority against the up-to-then exploiting minority. The role of the proletariat and the function of the dictatorship are to put an end to any exploitation in a very short term and to bring to fruition the socialist society. Lenin does not aim at the setting up of a free or popular state; this is a proposal he refers to only to reject it with total sarcasm. He is very clear in this respect:

"The notion that the proletariat needs a state is repeated by all opportunists, social-chauvinists and Kautskytes, who affirm this to be Marx's doctrine while 'forgetting' to add, firstly, that the proletariat (according to Marx) needs a state on the wane, i.e. a state so organized that it immediately begins to wither. And, secondly, the 'state' needed by the labouring people is to be 'the proletariat organized as the ruling class'." (1917, Vladimir Lenin)

If the final part of this sentence can create some uncertainty as to the permanence of a proletarian state, Lenin dispels any possible misunderstanding, adding further below that

"this proletarian state will begin to wither away immediately after its victory because the state is unnecessary and impossible in a society without class contradictions." (1917, Vladimir Lenin)

Certainly, there are passages in *The State and Revolution* where Lenin, the authoritarian leader, takes over Lenin, the revolutionary thinker. It is when he identifies himself and his party with the workers and proclaims:

"We ... will organize large-scale production, ... establishing strict, iron discipline supported by the state power of the armed workers, we will reduce state officials to the role of simple executors of our instructions."

At the same time he is convinced that

"such a start, on the basis of large-scale production, will of itself lead to a gradual 'withering away' of all bureaucracy." (1917, Vladimir Lenin)

Referring to the debate between Marx and the anarchists, Lenin stresses the fact that

"Marx deliberately underlines the 'revolutionary and transient form' of the state needed by the proletariat. The proletariat needs the state only temporarily. We do not at all disagree with the anarchists on the question of the abolition of the state as an aim. We maintain that, to achieve this aim, we must make temporary use of the instruments, resources and methods of state power against the exploiters just as a temporary dictatorship of the oppressed class is necessary for the abolition of classes." (1917, Vladimir Lenin)

On the whole, *The State and Revolution* is a powerful anti-state pamphlet. Not many texts, not even in anarchist literature, contain such strong statements against the state and in favour of its destruction.

Nevertheless, opportunism, that is the distortion and subjugation of theoretical principles to political practice, appears, once again, as the intrinsic trait of those who occupy positions of state power or are close to state power. This was true for the proclaimed anti-militarism of the German social-democratic members of parliament who supported the war; this is again true for the declared anti-statism of comrade Lenin as soon as he conquered state power. From that moment onwards the state became the indispensable instrument of the revolution to be defended at all costs. The survival of the revolution against external and internal enemies represented, overall, a convenient pretext for the glorification and strengthening of the state. The term "renegade" that Lenin used so extensively (for instance against Bernstein and Kautsky) applies very fittingly to "comrade" Lenin if we compare what he wrote in *The State and Revolution* and what he did during his time in power.

In fact, notwithstanding his theoretical position on the extinction of the state for the implementation of a socialist society, there is no other revolution that has enlarged so much the power of the state up to the point of suffocating the entire society.

At the same time, the makers of the Russian revolution kept pretending that theirs was a successful socialist revolution while it was nothing of the sort.

What they certainly and extraordinarily succeeded in was to instill in people's minds the equation state = society = socialism. After their revolution, most people all over the world started believing that socialism was nothing else than statism, i.e. the state owning, directing, and controlling everything.

The tragedy of the Russian experience is not only the fact that millions of human beings participating (willingly or unwillingly) in the experiment were brutalized and died for an illusion and a deception, but also that this illusion and deception became the path to be followed and the truth to be accepted for millions of people who believed they were dedicating their lives to the triumph of socialism.

As already remarked, the only real triumph of the Russian Revolution was the manufacturing of the (unwarranted) conviction that the broader and deeper the control exerted by the state on society, the better for socialism.

All the rest counted for nothing.

Even the reduction of differences in wages (celebrated by Marx with reference to the Paris Commune and advocated also by Lenin) was to become, in the words of Stalin, "a petty-bourgeois deviation." (June 1931). During the thirties, under "comrade" Stalin "the salaries of directors, chief engineers and administrators in the top stratum [were] up to one-hundred times higher than the average wage and up to three hundred times higher than the minimum wage." (1945, Arthur Koestler). On the whole, in "socialist" Russia industrial workers and peasants had to endure conditions much worse than those condemned by Marx with reference to the Industrial Revolution.

Even internationalism was regarded as suspect if it didn't mean submission to the policy dictated by the Soviet Union. One of the peaks of absurdity, from a socialist point of view, was reached when Stalin accused the Jews of the crime of being cosmopolitans.

Some voices warned that the Russian experiment had nothing to do with socialism but their words fell, to all practical purposes, on deaf ears. And this even if Lenin himself, before getting hold of abso-

lute state power, was stressing the absolute necessity to develop capitalism in Russia:

“... the idea of seeking salvation for the working class in anything save the further development of capitalism is *reactionary*. In countries like Russia, the working class suffers not so much from capitalism as from the insufficient development of capitalism. The working class suffers not so much from capitalism as from the insufficient development of capitalism. The working class is therefore *decidedly interested* in the broadest, freest and most rapid development of capitalism.” (1905, Vladimir Lenin, *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*)

After the Revolution, this necessity took the form of state capitalism. To present state capitalism as socialism and the occupation of state power by the Bolsheviks as a socialist revolution was something very convenient, even to opponents of socialism. If this totalitarian state power was equated to socialism, then those who opposed it could very well spread the message that they should be in control of the situation in order to act as a bulwark against socialism (i.e. against totalitarianism). At that point it was clear enough that implementing socialism and opposing socialism were only one and the same identical pretext to gain state power. For this reason, as we will see later, the political struggle following the Russian revolution should not be characterized anymore in terms of socialism versus antisocialism, both systems having become in practice pure and simple statism.

In a backward country like Russia, statism was dominated by a party élite which qualified itself as communist and which had succeeded in championing, initially, the distribution of the land to the peasants and the immediate ending of the war with Germany.

In a more advanced and industrialized country, in the presence of a substantial middle class, the political crisis would consign state power over to the party more able to capture the favour of an expanding petty bourgeoisie. This is what happened in Italy.

## The Italian Recipe

The Italian workers' movement started getting organized towards the middle of the XIX century, first as a series of mutual aid groups (*società di mutuo soccorso*) and workers' fasci (*fasci operai*). Finally, in 1892, the Socialist Party of Italian Workers was founded at the Genoa Congress. A push in that direction came when some prominent protagonists of the anarchist movement (first of all Andrea Costa) decided that a constant political struggle for progressive improvements of the workers' conditions was more likely to be successful than an abrupt social revolt for immediate emancipation.

Many aspects were beginning to operate in that sense. First of all, the new electoral law (1882) that allowed for an enlargement of the male right to vote that was allowed to grow progressively in direct relation to the increase in literacy. In 1912, universal male suffrage was eventually introduced, putting more weight on electoral and parliamentary politics.

Similarly to what was happening in other countries, the Italian state, under conservative or liberal governments, passed the first measures of social legislation such as sickness insurance (1886), accidents insurance and pensions (1898). More was to come under the governments of Giovanni Giolitti, a liberal, with the restrictions on the employment of children and the protection of women in the work place (1907).

This is really nothing new. The liberals, in Italy as elsewhere, were the true sowers of the seeds of statism in that they were replacing, with the state, friendly societies and self-help experiments (1996, Lorenzo Gaeta and Antonio Viscomi) that were already in existence and could have grown to represent the true backbone of personal and social care.

Furthermore, they did not limit their intervention to introducing more humane rules in the work place but went on to extend the presence of the state in the economy, an example being the nationalization of the life insurance industry (1912) under Giolitti.



A critical commentator of this evolution that was marred also by financial scandals of political origin, wrote that

"economic liberalism becomes state socialism" ["il liberismo diventa socialismo di Stato"]; and remarked that "Giolitti had the heroic cynicism of presenting as liberal this politics of state pillage." ["Giolitti ha avuto l'eroico cinismo di presentare come liberale questa politica di saccheggio dello Stato."] (1924, Piero Gobetti)

As a matter of fact, the Italian state had been dirigist and interventionist almost from its inception, granting protective tariffs to agricultural and industrial producers, promoting imperialist adventures, and finally participating in the First World War. These were all policies promoted by so-called liberal or bourgeois governments.

The situation in the socialist camp was no different. In 1872 Friedrich Engels expressed his views about the Italian members of the International. According to him

"all the self-proclaimed sections of the Italian International are run by lawyers without lawsuits, doctors without patients, students of billiards, salesmen and other traders, and, especially, journalists of the minor press with a more or less dubious reputation." (1872, Friedrich Engels).

This statement should not detract from the fact that there were also nuclei of workers and self-help societies not linked to the International, which were really working for socialism and social emancipation.

In any case, many years later, to confirm Engels' words, another sharp observer, Antonio Gramsci, referring to the political parties, some of which were the heirs of the International, stressed the original

"negative aspect common to all the political parties, which were born as electoral machines." ["la deteriorità dei partiti politici, che

nacquero tutti sul terreno elettorale"]. "The fundamental issue at the Genoa Congress [where the Socialist Party was founded in 1892] was the electoral question" ["al congresso di Genova la quistione fondamentale fu quella elettorale."] (1929-1935, Antonio Gramsci)

According to Gramsci

"the parties were not an organic component of the people (a vanguard, an élite), but a bunch of canvassers and intriguers, a gathering of petty provincial intellectuals, emerging from a selection gone awfully wrong." ["i partiti non furono una frazione organica delle classi popolari (un'avanguardia, un'élite), ma un insieme di galoppini e maneggioni elettorali, un'accolta di piccoli intellettuali di provincia, che rappresentavano una selezione alla rovescia."] (1929-1935, Antonio Gramsci)

With this human background and in the presence of the new opportunities offered by the political struggle to gain power and influence through the state, it is no wonder that the Italian Socialist Party developed a strong statist inclination, shared in different ways by those who said they wanted to change the state pacifically and gradually (the reformists) and by those who proclaimed they wanted to subvert and conquer it violently and swiftly (the revolutionaries). The only result coming out of this internal fight was the inability to take any effective decision of any nature (reformist, revolutionary) for fear of permanent divisions.

Eventually, the inevitable split took place in 1921 with the founding of the Italian Communist Party (Livorno, 21 January 1921).

Within a very short period, socialism in Italy would be obliterated by another movement led by an ex-socialist that would take from state socialism most of its ideas and, especially, most of its electorate: Fascism.

If we consider that the Italian Socialist Party received 32.4% of the electoral consensus only 3 years before the installation of fascism to state power, we realize the enormous shift in political favour that took

place in such a short time. This could happen only because the two movements were proposing the same recipes, i.e. the occupation of state power. Fascism succeeded because it looked more modern, more dynamic and more national.

Fascism was a mixture of socialist or populist verbiage sweetened by nationalistic and patriotic declarations. The outcome, which would be summed up later on in the slogan "*Italy proletarian and fascist*," became acceptable to many different strata of the population, even, in the end, to the monarchy and the aristocracy.

In other words, Fascism is a national socialism capable of appealing to a wide area of the electorate (it would obtain 65% of the popular vote in 1924), from the industrialist and the landowner to the rebel and the downtrodden, and especially to the average person who wanted peace and quiet, security and the trains arriving on time. It was the classic Italian *minestrone* that received the support of the main liberal newspaper (*Corriere della Sera*), the nationalistic patriotic circles, the petty bourgeoisie working for the state or aspiring to a secure job within the state machinery. It needed only the approval and the consecration of the king, and that duly arrived on the 29th October 1922.

In later historical reconstructions and interpretations, fascism has been portrayed as a reactionary movement in total opposition to socialism. This is true if for socialism we mean a conception and praxis where pre-eminence is given to civil society and individuals. Otherwise, with socialism deformed and reduced to statism, not much weight should be assigned to the contraposition fascism vs. socialism other than considering it as a fight (harsh and violent) by two political groups having, as already stressed, the same goal, i.e. the appropriation and occupation of state power.

The similarities between the two movements were clear from the start if Karl Radek, a communist propagandist and activist, already in an article written in 1923, was able to qualify fascism as a sort of "socialism of the middle classes." (1923, Karl Radek)

In his propaganda and political thinking Mussolini used many aspects of socialist analysis, derived especially from Blanquism and

early Marxism. For him, the concentration of the means of production in a few hands required the centralization of political decisions, that is the intervention of the central state. The state would be presented as an ethical institution in defence of the exploited masses and the planning brain of economic and social life, against the selfishness of the big capitalists and the (supposed) disorder brought about by the free market. Moreover, Mussolini salvaged the theme of the class struggle which, in the era of the nation state, was transformed into the fight conducted by the proletarian nations against the plutocratic countries. (1910, Enrico Corradini).

Mussolini even openly recognized the affinities between fascism and communism when in an intervention before the Italian Chamber of deputies (1/12/1921) he declared:

"fascists and communists, subjected to daily harassments by the police, could very well end up by associating for a period before eventually fighting each other for the share of the state spoils, considering, as I do, that between us, although there are no political affinities, there exist philosophical ones. We believe, like you, that a centralized unitarian state is a necessity, a state capable of imposing to every individual an iron discipline; the only difference is that you reach this conclusion through the concept of class and we through the concept of nation." ["fascisti e comunisti, sottoposti quotidianamente ad un martellamento di polizia, potrebbero finire anche per intendersi salvo a combattersi energicamente dopo per la ripartizione del bottino, anche perché io riconosco che fra noi e i comunisti non ci sono affinità politiche, ma ci sono affinità intellettuali. Noi, come voi, riteniamo che sia necessario uno Stato accentratore ed unitario, che imponga a tutti i singoli una ferrea disciplina; con questa differenza, che voi giungete a questa conclusione attraverso il concetto di classe, e noi vi giungiamo attraverso il concetto di nazione."]

The fascist recipe brought about what was then foreseeable from the start, that is a programme of massive intervention by the state as

regulator of the economic and social life of the nation, i.e. of the individuals. Large state institutions were set up to control the distribution of financial resources (IMI) and to give succour to the needs of the industrial structure (IRI). A modern historian has defined Mussolini as "the great priest of state collectivism." (1997, Denis Mack Smith)

Mussolini is the same person that, before his accession to state power, declared:

« The state, with its monstrous terrific machine, gives us a feeling of suffocation. The state was endurable for the individual as long as it was content to be a soldier and policeman; today the state is everything—banker, usurer, gambling den proprietor, ship owner, procurer, insurance agent, postman, railroader, entrepreneur, teacher, professor, tobacco merchant and countless other things, in addition to its former functions of policeman, judge, jailer, and tax collector. The state, this Moloch of frightful countenance, receives everything, does everything, knows everything, ruins everything. Every state function is a misfortune. State art is a misfortune, state ownership of shipping, state victualizing — the litany could extend indefinitely. ... If men had but a faint idea of the abyss toward which they are moving the number of suicides would increase, for we are approaching complete destruction of personality. The state is that frightful machine which swallows living men and spews them out again as dead ciphers. Human life has now no secrets, no intimacy, neither material affairs nor spiritual; all corners are smelled into, all movements measured; everyone is locked into his cell and numbered, just as in prison.» (Benito Mussolini, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, April 6, 1920).

It should be clear by now that politics is like a comedy, or a tragedy played by actors, impersonating various roles, whose aim is to act the part of successful figures in view of reaching popularity, acclaim and, in this case, power. For this reason, not much worth should be assigned to any belief proclaimed by a politician and no

label of any sort should be assigned to them other than that of occasional performers and master turncoats.

In sum, it could be said that an ex-socialist had realized in Western Europe the dream of the state socialists of enthroning the state as the supreme regulator of society. For this reason, Italian fascism should not be characterized as antisocialism but as a modern version, with respect to the Russian experience, of 20th century state socialism.

### **The English Path**

The English are those who have been most consistently and for the longest period immune from extensive statism.

In England, the free initiative of enlightened and caring individuals, and the activities of the organized labour movement were responsible for setting up a process of continuous improvement in living conditions that, in the course of some decades, might really have brought about a society where exploitation, poverty and hardship were a distant memory.

This social dynamic was altered by the introduction of the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884. These Acts, granting the right to vote to working men, made possible the political representation of their interests, paving the way to the introduction of a series of parliamentary measures in their favour.

This had the effect of transferring gradually the struggle for the emancipation of the individuals from the social to the political arena and from the social movements to the political parties.

In England, the Liberal Party was the one that, right until the beginning of the 20th century, represented the interests of the workers. The party had undergone a radical transformation with respect to its basic principles according to which the only justification for intervention by the state in the life of individuals was to prevent harm and watch over grievances.

In the United Kingdom, better than elsewhere, we can observe the trajectory of the Liberal Party, from one in favour of civil society to

one keen on introducing more and more statist measures to regulate and, supposedly, to ameliorate social life. As remarked, with a hint of satisfaction, by a supporter of state intervention, Sydney Webb:

"the National Liberal Federation adopts the special taxation of urban ground values as the main feature in its domestic program, notwithstanding that this proposal is characterized by old-fashioned Liberals as sheer confiscation of so much of the landlords' property." (1889, Sidney Webb, *The Basis of Socialism - Historic*)

For that matter, the conservative party was even more keen on state intervention:

"Mr. Chamberlain and the younger Conservatives openly advocate far-reaching projects of social reform through State and municipal agency, as a means of obtaining popular support." (1889, Sidney Webb, *The Basis of Socialism - Historic*)

They were all following on the trail of French and German experiences. Bismarck's welfare programme had in England a big influence on the introduction of social legislation between 1908 and 1911.

What all this amounts to is that, before statism became the benchmark of the socialist party, the road to statism had been very well prepared and inaugurated by other parties (liberal and conservative) who were supposed to be marching on a very different path.

Thanks to this statist inclination of all political parties, Sydney Webb could not help noticing (already in 1889) the omnipresence of the State and of its considerable power:

"The State in most of the larger industrial operations prescribes the age of the worker, the hours of work, the amount of air, light, cubic space, heat, lavatory accommodation, holidays, and meal-times; where, when, and how wages shall be paid; how machinery, staircases, lift holes, mines, and quarries are to be fenced and guarded; how and when the plant shall be cleaned, repaired, and worked.

Even the kind of package in which some articles shall be sold is duly prescribed, so that the individual capitalist shall take no advantage of his position. On every side he is being registered, inspected, controlled, and eventually superseded by the community; and in the meantime he is compelled to cede for public purposes an ever-increasing share of his rent and interest." (1889, Sidney Webb, *The Basis of Socialism - Historic*)

"Even in the fields still abandoned to private enterprise, its operations are thus every day more closely limited, in order that the anarchic competition of private greed, which at the beginning of the century was set up as the only infallibly beneficent principle of social action, may not utterly destroy the State. All this has been done by "practical" men, ignorant, that is to say, of any scientific sociology, believing Socialism to be the most foolish of dreams, and absolutely ignoring, as they thought, all grandiloquent claims for social reconstruction. Such is the irresistible sweep of social tendencies, that in their every act they worked to bring about the very Socialism they despised; and to destroy the Individualist faith which they still professed. They builded better than they knew." (1889, Sidney Webb, *The Basis of Socialism - Historic*)

There is nothing to object to in this analysis and portrait of historical reality other than to point out that what Sidney Webb defines as socialism is nothing else than statism, with society identified with and subsumed under the state. A confirmation of this view comes, indirectly, from Sidney Webb's own words, when he stigmatizes economic competition as totally detrimental to the state, with no mention of society and individuals, supposedly included under the term state.

The attraction of statism was proving irresistible in every political quarter especially because it was rewarding in terms of electoral consensus.

It should then appear as a normal and predictable development that socialist thinking, in England too, was becoming more and more



statist oriented, mainly, but not only, through the activities and writings of the Fabian Group.

One of the most important protagonists of the group was George Bernard Shaw. In 1889 he had contributed to the *Fabian Essays* with a piece on the economy of socialism in which he advocated:

"some agency having the power and the goodwill to distribute them [the resources] justly according to the labor done by each in the collective search for them. This desire is Socialism; and, as a means to its fulfilment, Socialists have devised communes, kingdoms, principalities, churches, manors, and finally, when all these had succumbed to the old gambling spirit, the Social Democratic State, which yet remains to be tried." (G. Bernard Shaw, *The Basis of Socialism - Economic*)

In 1927 Shaw expressed his political views in *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism*. It became a very popular and widely read book and so the notion of socialism depicted in those pages had a strong influence on the future connotation of the term. What emerges from those pages is an image of socialism as a reality based on the distribution of income and administration of services by a bureaucratic paternalistic entity, the State.

For Shaw

"until the Government has acquired all the power of employment that the private employers now possess" ... "it cannot distribute the national income equally" and so "it cannot practise Socialism." (1928 - 1937, George Bernard Shaw)

Shaw was convinced that, in order to reach socialism, the state

"must [itself] become the national landlord, the national financier and the national employer." [1928 - 1937, George Bernard Shaw]

He was then quite sympathetic to the Bolshevik experiment

(changing his mind only in a later period) to the point of declaring in a 1931 speech, after his journey to Russia:

"I have been preaching Socialism all my political life and here at last is a country which has established Socialism, made it the basis of its political system, definitely thrown over private property, and turned its back to Capitalism." (G. B. Shaw in Michael Holroyd, *Biography of Shaw*, vol. III, 1992).

The irony of the case is that, in the same year (1931) Stalin was branding as "a petty-bourgeois deviation" the very economic equality that Shaw thought could be achieved once the state became the only owner of all the means of production.

Another sympathizer and supporter of socialism was H. G. Wells. For Wells, socialism is "the organized civilized world state" (1908, H. G. Wells, *First and Last Things*). With this phrase he sums up the visions and expectations of his age, i.e. the idea of socialism not only as a world system but also as centred on a world state.

The liberal idea that society is a self-organizing system through personal free choices and the socialist vision of a society which

"organizing production on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers, will dispatch the whole state machine ... to the Museum of Antiquities, side by side with the spinning wheel and the bronze axe" (1884, Friedrich Engels)

have been, in the end, displaced and replaced by the statist conception based on the need for a controlling centre assumed as an indispensable datum. In Wells we go beyond national state socialism but we are still well inside state socialism, and in his case, Super State socialism.

On the whole, the ideas that Shaw and Wells expressed and qualified as socialist are symptomatic of an age where the State was the unquestioned point of reference for everybody, however they defined themselves, socialists or antisocialists.

In this respect, not very much will differentiate the ideas of the liberal Keynes and the liberal Beveridge from those of many labour leaders and activists. When the British Liberal politician Sir William Harcourt in a speech made in 1888 famously declared "We are all socialists now" he was only expressing a general conviction. He could have more appropriately said "We are all now in favour of state intervention" but the substance would have not changed in so far as for socialism it was already meant state socialism or statism.

The English path of continuous abandonment of classic liberalism and socialism towards statism would have, amongst other things, a certain influence on the USA which represents an exception with respect to the socialist/antisocialist discourse, but only in so far as the direct appeal and circulation of the term socialism is concerned.

### **The American Exception**

To call the USA experience with regard to socialism and antisocialism an exception, derives from the fact that no socialist party with a substantial following and clear statist inclination, like in Europe, has ever existed in the USA. However, this does not mean that statism has not appeared and prospered there, but only that those who introduced statist measures did so while, at the same time, proclaiming vehemently their anti-statism and pro-individualism credo (2000, Cato Policy Report). A sign of this is the fact that, in the USA, those in favour of state intervention have called themselves liberals, turning upside down the historical meaning of that word and avoiding the risk of using more appropriate but also less appealing labels.

From the beginning, the USA Federal and State governments have been very keen on making people believe, and the American people have been exceptionally willing to believe, that the presence of the state in American society is minimal.

American history shows that this is far from the truth.

Already in 1821 John Taylor was writing his *Tyranny Unmasked* to oppose the introduction of protectionist measures; unfortunately that

became reality in 1826. This is one of the clues that the collusion between business and government was spreading and consolidating.

Moreover, since the time of Andrew Jackson (1829) if not earlier, the capturing of state spoils and their distribution amongst supporters and sympathizers of the victorious party was considered the natural outcome of gaining state power. In this respect, the introduction of democratic representation was marching hand in hand with the democratization of political corruption.

By the end of the century, the phenomenon was so manifest that Engels dwelled upon it in a long passage in his 1891 introduction to Marx's *The Civil War in France*. He wrote:

"Nowhere do 'politicians' form a more separate and powerful section of the nation than precisely in North America. There, each of the two major parties which alternately succeed each other in power is itself in turn controlled by people who make a business of politics, who speculate on seats in the legislative assemblies of the Union as well as of the separate states, or who make a living by carrying on agitation for their party and on its victory are rewarded with positions. It is well known how the Americans have been trying for thirty years to shake off this yoke, which has become intolerable, and how in spite of it all they continue to sink ever deeper in this swamp of corruption. It is precisely in America that we see best how there takes place this process of the state power making itself independent in relation to society, whose mere instrument it was originally intended to be. Here there exists no dynasty, no nobility, no standing army, beyond the few men keeping watch of the Indians, no bureaucracy with permanent posts or the right to pensions. And nevertheless we find here two great gangs of political speculators, who alternately take possession of state power and exploit it by the most corrupt means and for the most corrupt ends, and the nation is powerless against these two great cartels of politicians, who are ostensibly its servants, but in reality dominate and plunder it." (1891, Friedrich Engels)

Besides this robbers' statism, existed also well-intentioned individuals, and currents of thought emerged, advocating what, by some, would be considered socialist measures, that is the intervention of the state for regulating most aspects of social life.

In 1888 Edward Bellamy came out with his futuristic novel *Looking Backward 1888-2000* in which he dreamt of a society totally administered by an entity that he called the nation.

In this anticipation of things to come we find all the seeds that make the spirit of the era:

- the rejection of individualism and the plea for its conquest: "the excessive individualism which then prevailed was inconsistent with much public spirit";

- the irresistible trend towards concentration and centralization: "the movement toward the conduct of business by larger and larger aggregation of capital, the tendency toward monopolies, which had been so desperately and vainly resisted, was recognized at last as a process which only needed to complete its logical evolution to open a golden future to humanity";

- the need for increasing intervention by the government: "the idea of such an extension of the functioning of government is, to say the least, rather overwhelming." (1888, Edward Bellamy)

For all these reasons

"the industry and commerce of the country ... were entrusted to a single syndicate representing the people, to be conducted in the common interest for the common profit. The nation ... became ... the sole employer, ... a monopoly in the profits and economy of which all citizens shared." (1888, Edward Bellamy)

There is no mention of socialism or collectivism in Bellamy's text but the brand of European "socialists" who were more and more leaning towards the state would have agreed with his analysis and solution.

In 1891 Ignatius Donnelly wrote a political novel prefiguring the coming 20th century, when private schools are abolished and the

state "owns all road, street, telegraph and telephone lines, railroads and mines, and takes exclusive control of the mails and express matter." (1891, Ignatius Donnelly). In this text the state was seen, once again, as the main actor in a stupendous progressive future.

At the same time, in academic circles, Lester Ward was attacking the principle of *laissez-faire* in favour of an active intervention of the state in many social fields. To stress again the exceptional and paradoxical situation of the USA, it must be said that the pro-statism messages of Ward were apparently less successful than the contemporary anti-statism writings of William Graham Sumner; however, while "Ward was forgotten and Sumner extolled, government and economy were moving along the lines charted by the former rather than by the latter." (1950, Henry Steele Commager)

Moreover, as pointedly remarked by the same Ward "those who denounce state interference are the ones who most frequently and successfully invoke it." (1895, Lester Ward)

In 1884, a group of young economists convened to found the American Economic Association. Amongst them there was Richard T. Ely, who prepared a draft of the association charter in which he expressed some very strong ideas, quite likely shared by a certain number of his colleagues, concerning the role of the state in society: "We regard the state as an educational and ethical agency whose positive aid is an indispensable condition of human progress." (in 1950, Henry Steele Commager)

At the beginning of the 20th century, the election of Theodore Roosevelt marked an important point on the road to the extension of the power of the federal state. Another was the participation in the First and the Second World Wars. During the inter-war period the Americans accepted a level of interference in their lives that not many people would have accommodated. The prohibition of the manufacture, sale or transportation of liquors, the state-upheld racial segregation, the intrusion of the Inland Revenue Department in personal affairs, they all bear to witness a pervasive and domineering state.

For this reason, in the history of the USA more than anywhere

else, the opposition to socialism, presented as upholding the freedom of individuals against subjection by the state, is, in many respects, totally fake, just part and parcel of political gimmick and chicanery, certainly not to be taken at face value by any social scientist.

The peculiarity of the USA position consists, then, in the fact that, in theory and as a matter of principle, mainstream politicians of different extraction proclaim to be all against socialism identified with statism; in reality, once in power, they do everything to implement statism and call it liberalism.

However, historians and social scientists, in general, have been quite unwilling to separate propagandist declarations from matters of fact, probably because they were more interested in upholding political positions than scientific truth. This is especially evident in the socialist-antisocialist struggle of the first half of the 20th century. However, before examining the following periods, it is necessary to ponder briefly the experiences previously sketched.

### **Some considerations on the socialist and antisocialist experiences**

The experiences examined lead us to highlight some aspects of the almost irresistible march towards statism of the supporters of the so-called socialist and antisocialist ideas and policies.

Statism has been the lethal virus that has infected both liberalism and socialism and has led them to an inevitable death. The virus was incubated by populist and conservative state leaders (Napoleon III, Bismarck), inoculated by self-proclaimed liberal politicians and intellectuals (Lloyd George, Sydney and Beatrice Webb), spread and made acceptable to the masses by authoritarian and national socialist figures like Lenin, Mussolini, Hitler. Statism has finally become an unquestionable reality for every political activist, ignorant of the fact that, for his forerunners, it was almost axiomatic that the state was an entity with a very limited role (liberals) or that was deemed to disappear with the advancement of progress (socialists).

The success of statism is then in direct relation with the debacle and rout not only of classic liberalism but also and especially of

genuine socialism. In fact, it is necessary to stress as clearly as possible that statism is totally incompatible with socialism, being based on:

- nationalism instead of internationalism
- militarism instead of pacifism
- state apparatus instead of civil society.

The death of liberalism first and socialism later, together with the success of statism, are due mainly to the existence of three self-supporting justifications that contributed to the setting up of the theory and practice of statism:

- Politically correct. The enlargement of the electoral suffrage and the advancement of representative democracy did make acceptable the regulation and control by the state of the life of individuals. The simple fact that people elect their rulers seemed, and still appears, to many, a plausible and sufficient reason for accepting the existence of individuals with powers wider than most hereditary kings of the past. Clearly, there is nothing objectionable to voluntary servitude if only it didn't involve, because of majority rule and the principle of territorial sovereignty, people who are not at all sympathetic towards the idea and reality of this transfer of power to an elected clique.

- Economically advantageous. The widening of the sphere of intervention of the state has swollen incredibly the number of state bureaucrats, state-related occupations, and state-distributed favours. For many this has represented the principal reason for supporting or not opposing statism. At a certain point the choice ceased to be between anti-statist or pro-statist parties but which party is likely to gain state power and it is thus expedient to support in order not to be left aside or behind when the division of the spoils takes place.

- Morally captivating. Statism has presented the state as the only real defender and protector of the masses, usually after having first destroyed or abolished existing autonomous institutions of self-help and self-protection. The moral argument has been used, for instance, by the state socialists against capitalist exploiters or presumed enemies of the people, and by the "antisocialists" (e.g. the national socialists) against the "plutocratic" nations and the "bloodsucker"



Jews. These campaigns against the rich and powerful, besides the brutality and the horror with which they were conducted, should not blind us to the fact that they created new rich and powerful figures, namely those that assumed the control of the state coffers and of the state levers of power.

The betrayal of principles and the putting forward of appealing justifications were both possible because the parties, and especially the socialist parties that emerged in Europe in the last quarter of the 19th century, were assuming, in different ways and forms, the characteristics of:

- A national sect. The socialist parties, founded in every country, became national parties with national interests to protect at any cost in order to capture the national electorate. The idea that a national entity could foster internationalism is, simply, an illusion. In this context, the only conceivable and actually practiced internationalism during the first half of the 20th century was the one represented by a centre (Berlin or Moscow) which all the other parties model themselves on (e.g. the German social democratic party) or took orders from (e.g. the Russian Bolshevik party).

- A militant sect. The conviction in the regenerative powers of the class struggle and in the righteousness of their own positions pushed the most militant components of the sect to a series of internal struggles for the control of the party (e.g. between revolutionaries and reformists) or for the control of the movement (e.g. between communists and anarchists in the Spanish civil war, or between communists and social democrats, called social-fascists, in Germany before Hitler's rise to power). The militant activists increasingly resembled military soldiers, fighting supposedly opponents, deviationists and saboteurs.

- A bureaucratic sect. The celebrated Social Democratic Party of Germany modelled its organization on the Prussian state and bureaucracy. Given its extraordinary electoral success, other European socialist parties copied the German social democracy. This assimilation and replication of authoritarian and bureaucratic forms of organization produced socialist parties whose daily working was

in total contradiction with the professed ends of building a socialist society.

Already in 1911 a member and an acute observer of the German Social-democratic party like Roberto Michels remarked that:

"the party of the workers has ended up acquiring a vigorous centralization of its own, based upon the same cardinal principles of authority and discipline which characterize the organization of the state. It has thus become a governmental party, that is to say, a party which, organized itself like a government on a small scale, hopes some day to assume the reins of government upon the large scale." (1911 and 1925, Roberto Michels)

He added:

"In the long run ... the party organization, whatever advances it may make in the future, will never succeed in becoming more than an effective and miniature copy of the state organization." (1911 and 1925, Roberto Michels)

And he concluded his assessment of the German social democratic party with words that could not have been more clear and sarcastic:

"we have now a fine conservative party which continues to employ revolutionary terminology." (1911 and 1925, Roberto Michels)

Amongst the revolutionary socialist terminology was the battle cry of the dictatorship of the proletariat. As advocated by Marx and Engels, the dictatorship of the proletariat means simply the rule of the many (exploited) over the few (exploiters). And this is also what the supporters of representative democracy advocate and what an insightful mind like Tocqueville has called "the tyranny of the majority." (1835, Alexis de Tocqueville).

We could add that the dictatorship of the proletariat came to be,

in a backward country like Russia, the brutal dominion of the party over the masses, and the tyranny of the majority is, in more advanced countries, the suffuse dominion of the government (or the parliamentary majority) over the masses. The difference, albeit striking, is only in the levels and forms of the constriction and is more related to the stage of civility reached by the subjects than to a presumed temperate nature of the power. It does not then represent a distinction in the conception of power insofar as they are both (the dictatorship of the proletariat and the dominion of the majority) a legacy of the current of ideas that has Rousseau as one of its exponents and culminated in the Jacobinism of the French Revolution.

This is a further aspect confirming the fact that the opposition socialism-antisocialism is a deceitful one, being something more manufactured than real. This emerges very clearly during the war years when the clash between the two factions reached its highest level.

### **Socialism and antisocialism during the war years**

The first half of the 20th century has been characterized as a period of total struggle between reaction and revolution, the former represented by Fascists and Nazis and the second by Socialists and Communists.

In reality, no historical phase has seen such a widespread intermingling of ideologies and individuals passing from one camp to the other, keeping nevertheless the same faith in the state and statism but under a different flag and political denomination. In fact, in many cases, what to an observer more worried about form (labels) than substance (content) appears as disloyalty and inconsistency, on closer inspection reveals itself to be only a tactical shift through which the original political conception is kept while the external shell (i.e. the original party one belonged to) is dropped. Too many cases have happened in too many countries for this phenomenon to be simply qualified as betrayal of ideals or, even worse, swept it under the carpet as unpalatable and disgraceful occurrences.

However, this is what has happened. Most of us at school have been presented with a reconstruction of events that tries to suppress ambiguities and dark aspects in order to convey only the convenient and appealing image of a fight between good and evil, with the good prevailing in the end.

Unfortunately, this image is far from the truth.

A more inclusive exposition and explanation of events points to the fact that, out of state socialism, already well developed theoretically and practically at the beginning of the 20th century in its nationalistic and bureaucratic features, first arose authoritarian state communism (Russia), and then authoritarian state socialism in the forms of Italian Fascism and German National Socialism. They all originated from the same root, that is state socialism. For this reason an unconventional participant and observer of the events in those years has defined the clash between fascism and socialism in Europe as "a civil war within socialism." (1938, Ignazio Silone)

The amount of evidence in support of this view is overwhelming. The fact is that for many historians and social scientists it was a disturbing piece of evidence, either because they wanted to forget their own involvement on the side of the losing faction or because it shattered the image of purity of the other faction to which they belonged or had recently moved to.

Let us look at some episodes and protagonists of that period.

What characterizes the main actors of the political struggle during the turbulent years that prepared and saw the disaster of the world war (1914-1945) is their obsession with a single aim: the gaining and holding of state power.

In Russia, from November 1917 and during the following years up to his death, Lenin threw over board all his Marxism and imposed his personal dictatorship as a new czar who knew better than anybody else how to push towards forced industrialization, while calling it socialist emancipation. He was also promoting Russian supremacism defining it as communist internationalism.

In Italy, Mussolini, the revolutionary socialist who had been arrested in the past (1911) for demonstrating violently against the

Italian imperialist war in Libya and who had signed the manifesto against the War (July 1914) of the Italian Socialist Party, had moved (October 1914) to a position favourable to the intervention in the conflict. Behind this decision there was, as always, the need to be at the centre of the action and of the attention. The same exigency would be common to many individuals after the first stage of the European civil war (1914-1918), people who felt not only disconcerted and dispirited by the emptiness of bureaucratic and parliamentary socialism but also forgotten and abandoned in their aspirations and would join the fascist movement.

Even after having been expelled from the Party and dismissed from the editorship of the Party daily paper (*Avanti !*) Mussolini reaffirmed his socialist roots giving the new paper he founded and directed (*Il Popolo d'Italia*) the subtitle "socialist daily." However, it was not only the leader of the movement, Benito Mussolini, who was a socialist-ex-socialist. From socialism came major figures like Roberto Farinacci, the one who was defined "the fascist prototype," and some revolutionary trade-unionists (like Edmondo Rossoni) besides the large bulk of the followers. Full of socialist themes and aims was the original programme of the party (*Programma dei fasci italiani di combattimento* - 1919), not a single point of which got implemented during the 20 years in which the party was in power.

In Germany, the claim of National Socialism to be part of socialism is openly declared in the very name of the party; the fact that it gets shortened to Nazism might be only a clever way for some people to hide an unpleasant association.

As a matter of fact, the original program of the *National-Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* adopted in 1920 was, like the fascist one, full of what were considered socialist demands, centred on the state intervening extensively in economic activity (see articles 7 and 13) and in the life of individuals (see articles 20 and 21). (1920, *Programme of the German Workers' Party*)

For this reason, at a certain point in time many socialists and communists became favourably disposed to the new national socialist party.

The masses, which had been instructed to expect from the state the solution to their problems, once they found themselves in dire straits and had to choose between empty internationalist verbiage coming from Moscow and national socialist promises by a German party, were ready, in the end, to align themselves under the national socialist flag. All of a sudden, many activists, disappointed by the inertness and inconclusiveness of their party, left bag and baggage and marched with the national socialists. As related by one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party, "it was a total surprise for the people of Berlin to see one day the typical *Schulmeienkapellen* of the communists joining in a street parade in brown uniform." (1938, Ignazio Silone).

This outcome had been prepared by the common organization and participation of communist and national socialists in strikes and demonstrations (like the Berlin public transports strike of 1932), by the common disparagement of and attack against any surviving trace of liberalism and liberal thinking, and, above all, by the common extolment of the state as the only truly social entity.

Besides that, the idea that the state was also an empty shell to be filled by anyone for any possible purpose, was proving to be irresistible. Even at the moment of the electoral landslide of the National Socialist Party in March 1933 (more than 17 million suffrages, i.e. 44% of the electorate), the communists were hopeful that their time had almost arrived. They considered those results "a big step forward in the direction of the final victory of the proletariat." (1938, Ignazio Silone).

Their battle cry was: "After the Nazis - We." (1982, Lewis A. Coser)

The experiences in Italy and Germany could be considered two abnormal degenerations of "socialism" were it not for the fact that, all over Europe, we witness the same evolution of "socialists" becoming "national socialists" and then "antisocialists" while remaining, all the time, in search of an entity (the leader, the party, the state) capable of guiding them towards total regeneration or, sometimes more concretely, granting them daily security.

The aspiration to total renewal, ending in total illusion and disil-

lusion, is epitomized, for instance, in France, by the trajectory of Georges Sorel. He started as a liberal conservative and became the leading theoretician of revolutionary syndicalism; after becoming disappointed by syndicalism, he entered the monarchist movement of *Action Française*, and finally, ended up declaring himself in favour of the Bolshevik revolution. Sorel's experience, albeit quite extraordinary, is not unique. (1976, Zeev Sternhell)

One of the most renowned examples of an individual in search of a political path is that of Pierre Laval, elected in 1914 as socialist deputy (of the extreme left), who became sympathetic to National Socialism and was, for a time, prime minister during the German occupation of France. Even more interesting is the case of Marcel Déat, one of the most brilliant minds of European socialism. Having graduated from the *École Normale*, he started teaching philosophy and in 1926 was elected as a socialist MP. After having contributed to the development of socialist thinking, during the thirties, he was amongst the founders of the *Parti Socialiste de France*, a nationalist organization in opposition to the socialist party of Léon Blum. He became the most outspoken admirer of Hitler and an active supporter of National Socialism as leader of the *Rassemblement National Populaire*.

The mutual fascination between socialism and nationalism is not circumscribed to declared socialists. Jacques Doriot, a communist expelled (1934) from the party for his Trotskyist positions, founded the *Parti Populaire Français* (1936), which would cooperate closely with the Germans during the occupation.

In Belgium we find Henri de Man, the president of the *Parti Ouvrier Belge* (Belgian Labour Party) and "one of the most original socialist philosophers of the twentieth century" (1976, Zeev Sternhell) who in 1940 welcomed the collapse of the plutocratic democracies as the prelude to a new era for the working class and for socialism. He collaborated with German National Socialism, convinced that the future of socialism belonged to them.

In Holland, the fascist movement of Anton Mussert called itself *Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging in Nederland* (National Socialist

Movement in the Netherlands) and this fact confirms, once again, that fascism was mainly state socialism with a national mark.

In the Northern European countries too the appeal of National Socialism was strong for many socialists and communists. The most famous of them was Vidkun Quisling in Norway. He was sympathetic to the Russian revolution and to the Bolsheviks, associated himself with the leaders of the Norwegian labour movement and was in touch with the Norwegian communists. Finally, his ideas of the fusion of nationalism with socialism led him towards the most dynamic and energetic leader of National Socialism, Adolf Hitler.

In Sweden the social-democratic party, which came to power in 1932 during a time of economic crisis, looked with interest and sympathy, in the following years, to German National Socialism and to the experiments of state intervention in the economy that would lend weight to their own statist construction already in progress.

In England, the economic crisis following the crash of 1929 brought onto the scene individuals who were looking for new solutions to face the growing unemployment. The most brilliant of them was Sir Oswald Mosley, a socialist MP.

In 1930 as a Labour minister he advocated a large plan of state intervention in industry and public works to promote employment, state control of the provision of credit and state regulation of international trade. The plan was rejected and he left the party. After a failed attempt at setting up a socialist party alternative to the Labour party, in 1932 he founded the British Union of Fascists.

While Mosley was progressively marginalised from political life and finally put under arrest because of his sympathies for German national socialism, his ideas of state intervention and state regulation survived and were given academic status by John Maynard Keynes and practical implementation by the American administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

The same ideas had been previously picked up and put to work by Hitler's administration in Germany. In those years, a financial expert of the Roosevelt circle expressed the conviction that the German national socialists had developed some very good technical



economic ideas (see 1949, Benjamin M. Anderson) hinting that they might be of some use also in the USA.

American intellectuals (economists, social scientists, law experts, etc.) did much to promote this attitude favourable to massive state intervention. It meant new employment possibilities for them and for their children. With respect to the number of employees in the federal executive civil service, including war and navy departments, we have the following figures:

- June 1916 : 480,327 employees (1910 pop.: 91,972,266)
- June 1946 : 2,748,545 employees (1940 pop.: 131, 669,275)

Even considering the increase due to the war, it remains an impressive growth if compared with the growth in population. The simple explanation is that the statist road undertaken required swelling the ranks of state employees. The national socialist vision of a pervasive and ubiquitous state had, then, succeeded in the most unsuspecting place.

The list of interpenetration of ideas and policies between so-called socialist and antisocialist personalities and movements could go on and on.

The fact that some of the figures previously listed found themselves on opposite war fronts is not proof that they were pursuing different aims. The war made strange bedfellows (e.g. the conservative Churchill siding with the "communist" Stalin) and strange enemies (the fascist Mussolini fighting against the fascist Metaxa). For this reason we should avoid using opposing categories like socialism versus antisocialism or freedom versus totalitarianism to interpret and portray the events of that period.

It would be better to talk of a phenomenon of generalized state socialism or, more precisely, statism. Within this common statist attitude and behaviour we could then distinguish between those motivated by calculated cynicism and those animated by misplaced idealism, because it is with reference to these two features that we could understand, at least from the psychological point of view, the phenomenon of state socialism during the period of the long European and World war (1914-1945).

An example of calculated cynicism is the pact Molotov-von Ribbentrop, when the emissaries of two state criminal gangs got together to devise an accord and make plans for some future looting (dismemberment of Poland). The national socialist von Ribbentrop, decorated with the order of Lenin, exemplifies with his colleague Molotov, once for all, that there is no difference whatsoever between "socialism" and "antisocialism" the moment they have become both state socialism. (1934, Voline; 1939, Otto Rühle).

A case of misplaced idealism is represented by Nicola Bombacci. Revolutionary by profession, he was with Lenin when the white guards were advancing on St. Petersburg and the communists were prepared for a withdrawal. He was with Mussolini when the Anglo-American forces were entering Milan and the fascists were forced to withdraw towards Como. He died at the hands of a firing squad, guilty of being at the wrong time on the wrong side of an inexistent divide because, from the theoretical and practical point of view, they all were and will continue to be statist, all united by the myth of the state.

### **Socialism and antisocialism after the war years**

The statist ideology was so ingrained in people's minds, (thanks also to the indoctrination passed down by the state school system) that, even after the War and the direct experience of what the state was capable of (massacres, concentration camps, suppression of freedom, manipulation of minds, etc.) there were many who had not lost their confidence in the state and were still advocating its intervention for the regeneration of society.

In Italy, the statist mental attitude that was present in the pre-fascist period, had been perfected during the fascist period to such an extent that the exponents of all the parties who emerged in the post-fascism period shared it. They were still idealizing the state and expecting from the state the solution to every problem. Carlo Levi, a doctor and writer sent by the fascist regime to obligatory confinement in Southern Italy, after having met in Turin friends and acquaint-

tances of different political orientations summed up the situation with these words:

"They were men of various opinions and dispositions: from the most enflamed extremists to the most rigid conservatives. ... They were all, fundamentally (it seemed to me now very clear) worshippers, more or less unaware, of the State; idolaters without their knowing it. It didn't matter if their State was the present one, or one they dreamt about for the future: in either cases it was the State, seen as something transcending individuals and the life of the people; tyrannical or fatherly provident, dictatorial or democratic, but always indivisible, centralistic and far away." (1945, Carlo Levi)

Fortunately, after the fall of Fascism and National Socialism the two most totalitarian states (Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany) had to abandon such extreme statism and to get, almost necessarily, on a path of relative liberalization and socio-economic openness. Moreover, in Germany, the memory of horrendous inflation caused by the political authorities led to the granting of autonomy to the *Bundesbank*, i.e. freedom from political interference. Both Germans and Italians were rewarded with an economic miracle that made, within fifteen years from the end of the war, the German economy the most powerful in Europe while in Italy an exceptional transformation was taking place that marked the definitive passage from a relatively backward and stagnant society to a more advanced and dynamic one.

Having said that, deep and diffuse vestiges of the past still remained, such as, for instance in Italy, a state institution like IRI (*Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale*) set up by fascism for rescuing ailing or half-baked industries.

But this was nothing compared to what was happening in other countries.

In England, an electoral landslide brought the Labour party to power in 1945 and this was seen as the historic opportunity to transform society according to the lines already sketched by the liberal

Beveridge in his famous report of 1942 and envisaged by the members of the socialist Fabian Society (see 1943, *Plan for Britain*). The illusion that a government could solve on a mass scale, by the magic of its intervention, personal problems of poverty and ignorance, was never so strong, reinforced by the resurgent myth of a socialist Soviet Union victorious against fascism. In the words of Harold Laski, one of the most renowned political scientists, the Soviet Union under Stalin was

"the audacious inventor of a new idea - the idea of a planned freedom." (1943, *Plan for Britain*).

Another famous intellectual, G. D. H. Cole, was on the same line of thought when he expressed the hope for

"the vast practical example of the Soviet Union to impress itself on the mass imagination of the British people as having a bearing on the future quality of their own lives." (1943, *Plan for Britain*).

We could accept the good faith of these intellectuals and forgive their total ignorance of all the existing data on the horrendously exploitative and totally un-free nature of the Stalinist regime; the fact remains that, spreading their faith in the thaumaturgic power of the state, they were embarking English society on a thirty year journey of socio-economic crises and unsustainable budget deficits that would diminish continuously the value of the pound. The post-war rise in the standard of living came through technological progress linked to individuals' ingenuity and tenacity, not out of state sponsored assistance and state run companies.

In post-war France there was no need for "socialists" in power to push for state intervention and direction of society. It was already in the French mental attitudes, since the time of Colbert, later through the Jacobins and Napoleon (the I<sup>o</sup> and the III<sup>o</sup>) and right down to the *Front Populaire* and to the Vichy government. Towards the end of the 1950's, with the return to power of General de Gaulle, the role of the state was stressed even more than usual, highlighting once again

the fact that increasing the power of the state was, in the post-war period, the common platform of "socialists" and "antisocialists" alike.

In the United States, the election in 1952 of a Republican president, General Dwight Eisenhower, brought an extension and expansion of social security programmes managed by the federal state. As remarked by a leading American socialist,

"this Republican president, avowed foe of 'creeping socialism,' has given us the most comprehensive program for a welfare state yet set forth by a high official." (Norman Thomas in 1967, Charles I. Schottland ed.).

The culmination of this fascination with statism was reached when another Republican president, Richard Nixon, the anticommunist and antistatist par excellence, declared, at the beginning of the seventies: "We are all Keynesians," meaning that all politicians and all political experts and commentators were, almost without exception, in favour of state intervention.

What the politicians, experts and commentators were failing to notice, at the same time, was that, in every country after the war, the tenacity and ingenuity of the people, when left free to operate, even in a partial and circumscribed measure, had produced technological and socio-economic progress contributing, more than all state interventions put together, to the reduction of poverty and insecurity.

However, there was an exemplary case to which some, fascinated by state intervention, referred when they wanted to extol the wonders of state socialism. This is the Swedish case.

In Sweden from the beginning of the 20th century, the provision of assistance for the poor and the aged granted by the old village communities was codified in laws and taken up by the state. As usual, a Liberal government started the process of the Welfare State with the introduction in 1913 of old-age pensions. This confirms, once again, that the Welfare State is certainly not a socialist invention; what the socialists did was only to expand and strengthen it.

When the Swedish social democratic party came to power in 1932,

all energies were channelled towards the recovery of production and the redistribution of economic wealth. In 1939 industrial production was 65% higher than in 1929; and while the other European countries were preparing for war, Sweden was overtaking all of them in economic wealth and social security.

However, this model was economically successful only during the period of growth in production. When the growth halted, the state got into serious financial trouble (the state sector deficit would reach 12% of GDP in 1993), besides being unable to keep all its promises in terms of provision of social services. With unemployment that would reach in 1996 more than 12% of the active population and 3 major devaluations of the krona (in 1976-1977, 1981-1982, and 1992) each of about 20% or more (1997, SNS Economic Policy Group Report) we have a picture of a state socialism that has run its course.

At the beginning of the '70s a critical observer was already qualifying the Swedish model of socialism as a totalitarian experiment, abhorring individuality and stifling creativity. (1971, Roland Huntford)

Up to then, the large majority of commentators of socialist inclination were stating that Sweden was not socialist enough because most industries were still privately owned. They were totally discounting the fact that the state controlled the economy in the most pervasive way through loan allocations, permit granting, centralized wage bargaining and so on. For these reasons the Swedish state was certainly not interested in the formal ownership of something over which it had substantial mastery.

At the beginning of the 80's the Swedish model appeared finally for what it was at root: unsuitable for creative individuals and unsustainable for society in the long run, based on a bloated state sector that supposedly promoted employment but actually fed parasitism and inefficiency, a state centralized decision making process that minimized flexibility and fostered passivity, and ever increasing taxation that had reached its limits of personal acceptability.

In the last quarter of the 20th century, it became, in general, more and more evident that not only was Soviet-like state ownership a

totalitarian nightmare but that also Swedish-like state socialism was a dead end reality.

Also in other countries, the idea that the state can successfully manage the economy and appropriately regulate society would be put to rest, in the socialist and antisocialist camps. New state leaders realized that something had to be done in order to save the state from scorn and bankruptcy. What they put in place was a new model of statism that would be taken on board, in the years to come, by "socialists" and "antisocialists" alike.

### **Socialism and antisocialism towards the end of the 20th and at the dawn of the 21st century**

By the final quarter of the 20th century it was clear that the more the state intervened, especially in the economy, under the pretext of socialism or of any other general conception opposed to socialism (keynesianism, welfarism, national duty, national interest, law and order conservatism, etc.) the faster it reached the end of its ascent and the beginning of its long descent from power, towards decadence and oblivion.

Some unconventional political figures (Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan) were brought to office having envisaged and in part promoted a shift of attitudes towards the state.

In England, the sale of some assets owned by the state and the beginning of a liberalization of trade and finance, allowed the British economy to come back to life after decades of stagnation if not decay.

At the same time, the USA were also embarking on a process of liberalization and reduction of state intervention in the economy, that actually started under president Carter (Democratic party), was taken up and given some momentum under president Reagan (Republican party) and continued under president Clinton (Democratic party).

These policies of economic liberalization and denationalization have been generally qualified as anti-socialist; they proved to be quite successful from the point of view of economic performance and the

rise of state revenues so that they were taken on board in recent years by many governments, especially "socialist" governments.

In France, the brief experience of old style nationalizations undertaken by president Mitterrand at the beginning of the 1980s came to an abrupt halt when it was clear to everybody that the general economic situation was seriously deteriorating. The crisis was followed by a quick retreat and by a change in economic policies that, in due course, would see the nationalizations of the "socialist" François Mitterrand replaced by the denationalizations of the "socialist" Lionel Jospin.

In Italy, the participation in power of the socialist party at the beginning of the 1960's had marked the revival of nationalizations, the strengthening of state economic intervention, and, at the same time, the end of the post-war exceptional growth. During the 90's, the coming to power of the communists (or ex-communists) would instead be marking the beginning of the denationalization of the economy through the sale of state firms.

Only in Germany, the unification-annexation by West Germany of East Germany has introduced, in this panorama, a discordant note. The 1990s saw a resumption of state intervention characterized, above all, by economic choices dictated by political motives (e.g. the 1 to 1 conversion of the East Germany currency for the West Germany Deutsche Mark). The politicians (in this case the Christian Democrats under Chancellor Kohl) were again meddling in monetary matters with negative consequences. The result is that it is taking longer for the new Germany to come out of the problems brought about by the unification than it took for West Germany to resurge from the destruction and ravages of the last war. This is most likely due to the different paths undertaken: personal free initiative then, state managed intervention now.

Outside Europe, one of the most interesting examples of denationalization of the economy took place in New Zealand during the 1980s under a Labour government.

In general it could be said that, while in the past the liberals initiated state intervention and acted like "socialists," now some socialists



are promoting economic liberalism and are acting like "liberals." In this impersonation game, in which the terms socialist and liberals have lost their original meaning, what should, in any case, never be overlooked is the fact that the state is still there, with its huge presence.

In fact, even if state socialism has collapsed in Eastern Europe and is on the retreat almost everywhere, we should not confuse economic retreat with political disappearance.

What has happened is that the decline of the economic role of the state has permitted the strengthening of its political role. This means that the state rulers are focusing their attention less on managing directly the economic machine and more on letting it grow freely in order to extract resources out of it; less on providing employment (this is now the task of the economic actors) and more on controlling people through the state security apparatus and manipulating them through the mass media, owned by the state or fed with news manufactured by state spin doctors.

In other words, the new conception of the role of the state is that the state should leave more room to the economy for working (almost) undisturbed in order to produce goods and services in growing quantity. The aim is to drain resources from a productive apparatus in better shape through high taxes on goods and services (in Europe on average between 15 and 22% of the final price). The resources so absorbed are then used to pay state employees, to assist some categories of state subjects, and to protect the ruling élite from what are considered internal and external menaces (dissidents, migrants, minorities).

The new role taken up by the state could be compared to that of a rentier to whom is destined between 40 and 50% of all the income generated in a country, and who is, at the same time, not only unable to spend it wisely and efficiently, but is also accumulating increasing debts. That was once the role and behaviour of the decaying aristocracy and monarchy in pre-revolutionary France.

In the 2002 presidential campaign in France, the candidate of the

National Front, Jean-Marie Le Pen characterized his political stance as:

- socialement de gauche (socially on the left)
- économiquement de droite (economically on the right)
- nationalement français (nationally French).

Probably he was not aware that he had highlighted also the traits of the new rentier state that the state politicians of all colours and denominations are trying to build, albeit with different stresses and with some corrections and widening of the horizon (e.g. the adjective French being replaced by the term 'European' or 'French in Europe').

For those who still believe in the original socialist message of the withering away of the state and are willing to work for this to happen, this right-left-national state is only the last absurd but ever recurring pastiche of a useless and dangerous entity.

It is time to go beyond the state and so beyond the silly and fake opposition of socialism vs. antisocialism, convenient masks hiding the unsavoury reality of statism.

### **Beyond socialism and antisocialism**

To go beyond socialism and antisocialism means to go beyond a fake opposition and a fabricated deception.

As already repeatedly pointed out, socialism and antisocialism implemented in the course of history both amount to the same phenomenon: statism.

Certainly, it could be objected that not all statist experiences are the same and that some of them should not be dismissed so lightly, having done a lot to promote socio-economic security.

For instance, state socialism as implemented in Northern European countries has greatly contributed to the welfare of the common man. While this should be openly acknowledged and not unduly belittled especially where and when life conditions were harsh as in the Nordic environment of the past, it is also necessary to say that the time has arrived, on the basis of past material growth, to move forward to a development that has mainly to do with the self-

responsible choices of autonomous human beings and voluntary communities.

Moreover, the centralistic-paternalistic model, while it might be successful in the early stage of growth, is likely to form a regimented person, not so well adapted not only to create new realities but also to cope with new evolving realities.

And this is the core of the question.

In both socialist and antisocialist thinking and acting the central concern has been identified in the economic security of the common man. But economic security:

- should not be an aim in itself but one of the conditions that facilitate the attainment of a variety of personal and social ends;
- should not be a demand made upon the political authorities but a personal conquest originating from and leading to the strengthening of the personality and the development of enriching social relations.

When economic security is presented and becomes the overwhelming preoccupation of the people and when the people are led and start to believe that a superior political organization is capable of granting it to them, at that moment the conditions are in place for the state to replace the Church as the authority which provides paternalistic tutelage to the common man. With the state we reach the most totalistic form of tutelage ever implemented in history, under terms that are not, any longer, voluntary but inscribed in compulsory laws through administrative entities, affecting (almost) everything and everybody, with soft manipulation or harsh persuasion. Personal freedom becomes conditional and subordinated to political and economic security, and the individual becomes through and through a state subject (i.e. somebody lying under the state). In the final stance, human life is reduced to a full-time job and a full belly, with the human being becoming part of a physically satiated and morally insensitive herd.

In this state of affairs we find the most complete implementation of the pact that has existed throughout history between a master and

his servants: loss of freedom and obedience in exchange for security and assistance.

This is what state socialism and antisocialism have amounted to: the re-proposition of the old relationships of master and servants, proper for instance to feudalism, under the modern apparel of statism. This could have been avoided if both socialism and antisocialism had stressed aspects and aims different from those they did, namely:

- Social dynamics instead of political confrontation

Social dynamics does not require permanent leaders and representatives because it arises from situations that are not (fully) pre-ordained. It is only when a free social dynamic is obstructed or manipulated (e.g. institutionalized) that professional leaders and representatives emerge. At that point it is very likely that the debate and the action move to the terrain of political power instead of taking place in the area of social relations and possibilities. Political power involves the concentration and exertion of dominion by one group over another; social relations and possibilities refer to the continuous widening of horizons and options to new groups and individuals.

- Personal emancipation instead of state tutelage

In the socialist and antisocialist experiences the individual is somebody to be disciplined and controlled, assisted and cared for, because the human being is considered to be basically:

- weak: unsteady and helpless
- ignorant: unwise and improvident
- vicious: unmerciful and violent.

In due course, many individuals assume the traits that are attributed to them and behave in the way they are treated; and so they become weak, ignorant and vicious as it has been assumed they were from the start.

In the past, some classical socialists presented the transition from capitalism to socialism as the passage from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of liberty. According to their view, the evolution of capitalism (technological progress) and the social struggle would produce a fully developed polyvalent individual. Instead, what the

revised socialist model has put forward, even in its most promising experiences, is a belittled and mutilated individual, kept on the leash by the state for fear that he could do harm to himself and to others.

The fact that socialists and anti-socialists emphasised political confrontation and state protection was an inevitable choice once they took political power as the means of their activity and state power as the end. This is, once again, the re-actualization and modernization of a past reality. In the modern world, political conflicts have replaced the wars of religion. It follows that the imposition or the attempt, conducted more or less vigorously, to convince everybody of the universal superiority of a political creed has taken the place of forced conversion or moral indoctrination as to the supremacy of a religious faith and of its related practices (1967, Henry Kamen). The results have been even more terrifying and destructive for the body and for the mind. In the most favourable cases, the general outcome has been a crushing of moral, mental and material energies, already foretold by Tocqueville long time ago. (1840, Alexis de Tocqueville)

The idea that diverse political beliefs cannot co-exist as personal convictions but that, rather, they should fight each other to gain state power and, having achieved it, impose on everybody their articles of faith in the form of laws of the state, is like the belief, held in the past, that various religions could not live side by side but one had to prevail and root out or expel all the others present in a specific territory, imposing to everybody its paraphernalia of rules and rites. Clearly, a creed that tries to force itself on everybody through powerful entities like the Church or the State should not be called either a moral or a political conception but simply a totalitarian yoke.

The wars of religion ended when the Church lost a great deal of moral authority and religion was dissociated from temporal power; once that happened, religion became a spiritual and personal experience and religious freedom was accepted as a matter of fact, almost automatically.

The political struggles for dominion will end when political creed will be dissociated from monopolistic state power imposed on everybody living in a specific area (territorialism) and affecting every

aspect of their social life (totalitarianism). At that moment the state will cease to exist as territorial and totalitarian power; individuals will then be free to profess and, what is important and different from now, to practice any political creed (or no political creed), following the rules that they have freely subscribed to, without any imposition on others who do not want to be part of that association or who have stipulated a different contract with different rules (1860, Paul-Émile de Puydt). Certainly, the essential requirement for the validity of any contract is the presence of free will amongst the contracting parties and the absence of any coercion towards those external to it.

Furthermore, it is very likely that, once individuals are left free to develop and associate without allegiances or restrictions imposed on them from birth, we will find that in every political creed or religious faith or agnostic conviction freely professed and practiced there are the same basic principles proper to a free human nature and to a gratifying social intercourse (universal brotherhood/sisterhood, care and mutualism, justice and fairness).

The freedom to practice different political creeds, following different rules, requires, naturally, the disappearance of any monopolistic pretension by any organization, be it the Church in the past or the State in the present. Only at that moment could we really consider ourselves civilized individuals having gone not only beyond fake convictions (like the socialist and antisocialist opposition) but also beyond our idiotic and pathologic fixation with shaping and dominating society at large. Then, each of us will concentrate on the more humble and necessary task of becoming a real, rational and truly relational human being.

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## ANARCHISM / ANTIANARCHISM

The origin of the idea  
The core of the vision  
The manipulation of the term  
The hammering of the protagonists  
The trashing of the conception  
The exhaustion of the message  
The erasure from history  
The impossible task of anarchism  
The necessary renewal of anarchism  
The everlasting value of anarchism  
The various positions of anarchism  
Beyond anarchism and antianarchism  
References



## The origin of the idea

It is often claimed that the concept of human being and what it means to be human is strictly linked to two basic realities: development and freedom. Without development, the human being can never emerge out of the bundle of fragile nerves, bones and muscles that make up the little child; without freedom, no proper integral development can ever take place.

This is why development and freedom, i.e. a free human development, given that the two are non-separable aspects, represent a powerful aspiration of every human being, never extinguished or extinguishable even in situations of prolonged suppression and suffocation of both factors.

It is no wonder that the celebration of freedom (and implicitly of human development) is one of the most recurring themes of philosophers, novelists, essayists.

We found it in the writings of Greek philosophers like Epictetus (*"Freedom is the right to live as we wish"*) and in those of Roman authors like Cicero (*"Freedom is a possession of inestimable value"*). In the views of the Christian theologians, freedom is the pre-requisite for ethical action because, without free-will, there is no responsibility and so no possibility to question an act on the basis of its morality.

Referring to the works of western philosophers, it suffices to mention Immanuel Kant to grasp the importance that freedom plays in theoretical and practical life. For him freedom is a postulate or a necessary supposition of pure practical reason (*Critique of Practical Reason*, 1788) and, because of this, *"freedom is a property of all rational beings"* (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 1785). In the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) Kant expressed what will be, for some, a recurrent theme, strictly connected with the topic being examined here: *"anarchy is norm and freedom without force."*

It is on the trails of all these theoretical formulations and practical positions on liberty that, in the course of the 19th century, a movement came to light under the name of anarchism.

The term "anarchy" is a quite old one, with positive or negative

meanings attached to it according to the subjective inclinations of the user.

The first who employed it as a mark to define a personal conception, leading to a new way of organizing social relations characterized by the absence of a domineering external power, was Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.

In his controversial text, *What is Property ?* (1840), after posing to himself the question about his preferred form of government, and so about his position towards social organization, he replied: “*Je suis anarchiste*”. (“I am anarchist”).

From that moment, those who want society organized without the existence of a supreme invasive power called THE STATE have adopted the name of “anarchists” and have given the name of “anarchism” to the set of ideas that shapes their thinking and guides their actions.

Let us then see what are the basic notions and practices that are shared by those who advocate anarchism and call themselves anarchists, and the main criticisms made to them by those who oppose and fight it.

### **The core of the vision**

Anarchism can be seen as a radical extension of classical liberal principles. Some liberal thinkers like Frédéric Bastiat, Gustave de Molinari, John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, developed and expounded many ideas that will be accepted or would be acceptable to many anarchists. We could condense the bedrocks of anarchist thought with reference to the following basic convictions:

- The primacy of the individual and the refusal of any imposition concerning the way personal and social life is organized. In the words of Proudhon: “Whoever lays his hand on me to govern me is a usurper and tyrant, and I declare him my enemy.” [*Quiconque met la main sur moi pour me gouverner est un usurpateur et un tyran. Je le déclare mon ennemi.*] (*Les Confessions d'un Révolutionnaire*, 1849).

And even those anarchists (like Bakunin and Kropotkin) who lean

towards a collectivistic or communistic approach to social organization, stressing the importance of cooperation and social relations, never seek to superimpose any social institution on the free individual and his/her voluntary social arrangements.

- The end of privileges bestowed by the power to some individuals or groups, be they feudal landlords, clerical hierarchies, aristocratic barons, or the new class of bourgeois that were establishing cosy relationships with national state rulers in order to gain trade protection and economic subsidies.

- The abolition of any political power, of which the modern central state is the supreme embodiment. Anarchists are convinced, like the liberal Lord Acton, that power corrupts, and are aware that the concentration of power in one ruling entity is the sure recipe for personal and social disaster. Moreover, unlike the socialists, they think that to use political tools and to participate in the electoral game is the road to the degeneration of their conception and the decay of their movement.

Some of the basic principles held by the anarchists come directly from the agenda of the French revolutionaries and their demands and aspirations for Liberty, Fraternity, Equality. At the same time, it is also true that the anarchist movement emerges as a reaction to the social arrangements produced, in the final instance, by the French Revolution. As pointed out by a writer on anarchism:

"Born out of the division between the state and society that results from the French Revolution, [anarchism] refuses the state and tries to reconstruct society on the basis of the autonomous will of the individuals." (Henri Arvon, *L'Anarchisme*, 1951)

In fact, the French Revolution marks the beginning of the installation of a central bureaucratic state and the passage from feudal (local) strictures into state (national) constrictions. This is done in the name of a perverted idea of Liberty (intended as obedience to state made laws), Equality (intended as state-imposed uniformity) and Fraternity (intended as docility under the watchful eye of the paternalistic state).

No one has expressed all this better than Proudhon, in a long famous passage:

"To be **GOVERNED** is to be kept in sight, inspected, spied upon, directed, law-driven, numbered, enrolled, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, estimated, valued, censured, commanded, by creatures who have neither the right, nor the wisdom, nor the virtue to do so.... To be **GOVERNED** is to be at every operation, at every transaction, noted, registered, enrolled, taxed, stamped, measured, numbered, assessed, licensed, authorized, admonished, forbidden, reformed, corrected, punished. It is, under the pretext of public utility, and in the name of the general interest, to be placed under contribution, trained, ransomed, exploited, monopolized, extorted, squeezed, mystified, robbed; then, at the slightest resistance, the first word of complaint, to be repressed, fined, despised, harassed, tracked, abused, clubbed, disarmed, choked, imprisoned, judged, condemned, shot, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed; and, to crown all, mocked, ridiculed, outraged, dishonoured. That is government; that is its justice; that is its morality. And to think that there are democrats among us who pretend that there is any good in government; Socialists who support this ignominy, in the name of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity; proletarians who proclaim their candidacy for the Presidency of the Republic! Hypocrisy! ..." (*General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteen Century, Epilogue*, 1851)

That is why the authoritarian outcome of the French Revolution, masked by appealing expressions and lofty words, prompted the formation of the anarchist movement and the commencement of the theoretical and material clashes between anarchism and statism.

### **The manipulation of the term**

The full installation into power of the national central state required the continuous implementation, by the state rulers and their apparatus (police, army, bureaucracy, the propaganda machine), of a

strategy of neutralising adversaries, if they were not amenable to be corrupted and cajoled into the statist ideology.

To this effect, the first and more effective long-term move was to discredit the opponents by associating the name of their movement and of their members (anarchy, anarchists) with the most atrocious characteristics.

Anarchy then became synonymous with disorder and the anarchists were presented as the perpetrators of all sorts of violent acts fomenting disorder. Any situation in which there was a lack of central state power was called anarchy and was depicted as the source of utmost depravity and with the potential to produce further calamity. The aim was to terrify the common person and to reduce him into voluntary servitude.

By doing so the state rulers implemented an old and recurrent strategy that, albeit comprehensible when the absolute imperative is to hang on to power, remains nevertheless, totally dishonourable, dishonest and, to people with basic notions of history, even ludicrous.

As pointed out by Solneman (Kurt Zube) in his *Manifesto*:

“It is quite understandable from their point of view that those striving for or practising domination should equate a condition of non-domination with disorder or even chaos, because, in this way, they try to justify their own domination.” (Solneman, *The Anarchist Manifesto*, 1972)

However, it is a travesty of reality to equate lack of central power with disorder because it is exactly the presence of a power determined to exploit others, that is the most relevant cause of disorder. Again, in the words of Solneman:

“Disorder is always the consequence of dispute, and dispute arises unavoidably whenever someone attempts to dominate, i.e., to oppress another person.” (Solneman, *The Anarchist Manifesto*, 1972)

It is very clear to anyone who bothers to examine the course of

history with a non-distorted eye, that this is the case. We have plenty of instances when a state power has generated hell on earth. And, in addition to the well-known state historical figures that have orchestrated genocides and mass killings, we have the daily injustices and outrages perpetrated by political bosses and their cronies. Behind a facade of supposed order, we have actual disorder and the real explosive source of even more disorder as a reaction to state oppression, corruption, and exploitation.

It is then not only deceitful but tragically laughable when state-oriented journalists and pseudo-intellectuals paid by the state talk of a power vacuum, even when referring to the ending of tyrannical and corrupted governments. Likewise, we could lament a "vacuum" in the body when a malignant excrescence (a tumour) is surgically removed. However, to a mentally sound person this way of expressing things and of complaining at the loss of that excrescence would appear as a sign of pathology in the mind.

In the hands of state rulers, the terms "order" and "disorder" have then acquired strange connotations that have nothing to do with human rationality. Because of this manipulation of the language, we could say that there was "order" in the Soviet Union under Stalin because a strong state power was in place and there was "disorder" during the Renaissance in the Italian peninsula when the power of the various Dukes and Princes was quite shaky. However, the "order" of the first produced the Gulag where at least ten million people were exterminated, and the "disorder" of the latter gave to Giotto, Botticelli, Masaccio, Michelangelo, and many others an opportunity to freely express themselves and produce their masterpieces.

Moreover, the association between anarchy and disorder becomes totally farcical once we come to know that one of the most vigorous expressions of the anarchist movement emerged in the Jura mountains, amongst watchmakers, where order and precision are a necessary requirement without being an irritating imposition.

Nevertheless, with the monopolistic territorial state controlling education and the means of information, it was practically impossible to avoid the spread of this obvious falsehood, i.e., the automatic

association between anarchy and disorder. In addition to that, we have also the blunders caused to the movement and to the conception by the actions of certain self-proclaimed anarchists that did not help in countering this prejudice.

### **The hammering of the protagonists**

The anarchist movement was characterized and animated by some protagonists coming from an aristocratic milieu, as in the case, for instance, of Mikhail Bakunin, Pëtr Kropotkin, and Louise Michel, and by well-cultivated individuals like, for instance, Errico Malatesta (medical student), Elisée Reclus (geographer), Pietro Gori (lawyer), Francisco Ferrer (educator), Isabel Paterson (writer), and many others.

The liberal upbringing and generous humanistic inclinations of those individuals could not help them from colliding with the state power, and almost all of them had to pay a heavy price for their independent way of thinking and acting.

Both Bakunin and Kropotkin spent years in a Russian prison, in the (in)famous Fortress of Peter and Paul, before escaping to Western Europe. Kropotkin had also to pass some years in a French prison for his anarchist activity. Louise Michel was deported to New Caledonia (1873) for her participation in the Paris Commune. She was granted amnesty in 1880 but, afterwards, suffered imprisonment on many occasions because of her struggle against political and social oppression. Errico Malatesta had to undergo a life of wandering (Egypt, Geneva, Buenos Aires, Rumania, Paris, London, the United States) because of repeated state expulsions and harassment that ended only with his death in Rome, in 1932, while working as an electrician, in a country under the spell and talon of Mussolini.

These are only some of the many instances of a continual methodical persecution of the anarchists by the state. In fact, state rulers were determined to suppress with all means any conception and action of emancipation from political subjection and economic exploitation.



The anarchists and the socialists were then the main targets of state repression, using the police and the law (for instance, the anti-socialist laws introduced by the German Reichstag in 1878).

However, in the course of time, the anarchists remained the only ones that were totally outside the state imposed "order" and this because of one very important differentiation between socialists and anarchists that has had many important consequences.

The First Congress of the International Working Association held in Geneva in 1866, declared, in the adopted preamble (based on Provisional Rules drafted in London in 1864), that "*l'émancipation des travailleurs doit être l'oeuvre des travailleurs eux-mêmes*" ("the emancipation of the workers must be the effort of the workers themselves"). This meant, for many members of the Association, the abandonment of the illusion of liberation via political means and the consequent refusal to take part in electoral chicanery and related party struggles. All political activity was considered good only for producing power-hungry leaders with their fake daily promises that would lead only to real future deceptions.

Nevertheless, this position was not shared by another section of the International Association led by Karl Marx. And so, a clash erupted in the following years between the advocates of direct action and self-emancipation, of which Bakunin was the main figure, and those who favoured taking part in the political struggle in order to seize the machinery of the state and introduce revolutionary measures.

The dispute culminated in The Hague Congress (1872) when Bakunin and the anarchists were expelled from the International Association. In the following years and decades, the anarchists had to suffer ostracism and persecutions not only from the actual state power (the bureaucratic-bourgeois state rulers) but also from the advocates of the future state power (the bureaucratic-socialist state supporters).

The scission between socialists and anarchists was a general disaster in so far as it accentuated to the extreme the worst aspects present in both camps.

For the socialists, taking part in political action and electoral contests, by setting up national socialist parties, resulted in the creation of a fully bureaucratic mentality that would turn upside down the entire message of self-emancipation and of abolition of privileges. The choice in favour of almost exclusive political actions will reconcile definitively the socialists with the state. After the First World War, for whose outbreak some socialist parties were co-responsible in association with the reactionary leaders of the national-corporatist states, socialism as national socialism will be only a variant of statism under the names of Russian communism, Italian fascism, German Nazism.

For the anarchists, on the other side, the separation led to stress the purity of the message, with some sympathizers erupting in desperate outbursts of presumed exemplary and cathartic vengeance. A rebellious and violent approach became predominant and direct action, or propaganda by the deed, came to mean, for quite a few of self-professed anarchists, to bomb, to kill, to rob, and all that in the name of Anarchy.

That is why, out of immaturity and impotence, the romantic bombastic and bomb-making aspect of anarchism, so dear to pseudo-anarchists and to state antianarchists alike, was ready to take centre stage, with nefarious consequences for the movement and for the idea.

### **The trashing of the conception**

The relevant, appealing, and distinguishing point of the anarchist conception is the idea that voluntary social organization, i.e., one not based on authoritarian and exploitative practices, is possible. Out of this social organization based on free choices, order will emerge. This idea is condensed in Proudhon's conviction of "liberty not the daughter but the mother of order." [*la liberté non pas fille de l'ordre, mais mère de l'ordre*] (*Solution du problème social*, 1848).

Clearly this requires, especially from those who want to practice anarchy in a still authoritarian context, a deep-seated attitude of inde-

pendence and non-conformism, in addition to the capacity for self-organization. That is why, contrary to state propaganda, we do not fall into "anarchy," wrongly intended as disorder, but we ascend towards anarchy, that is towards ever better forms of voluntary self-organization in personal and social spheres.

This has not always been clear even to those who openly declared themselves anarchists. Bakunin, Malatesta and Berneri, amongst others, had to remind often that anarchy is not at all against organization and order but simply against impositions and coercions, deceptively presented by the ruling strata as indispensable tools for ensuring organization and order.

Bakunin, especially, was careful to stress that the anarchist is not even against authority based on recognized and accepted knowledge, but only against authoritarianism founded on sheer power. Moreover, given the variety of fields of knowledge and related competences, "there is no fixed and constant authority, but a continual exchange of mutual, temporary, and, above all, voluntary authority and subordination." (*What is Authority?*, in *God and the state*, 1882)

However, the fear of appearing authoritarian and ignorance about the true nature of anarchy has resulted in the fact that some sections of the anarchist movement have accepted and condoned many violent actions and disorderly behaviour just because they were committed by individuals that professed to act in the name of anarchy. This has led to two very negative consequences, namely:

- attracting to the movement dubious individuals (i.e., enraged, deranged, violent, passionate, self-centred people) that could justify crazy actions or atrocious criminal undertakings as a rightful reaction against oppression.

- permitting the infiltration of *agents provocateurs* that were pushing for even more atrocious actions to discredit the movement and facilitate the repressive intervention of the state, ready to present itself as the indispensable guarantor of "order".

And this is what regularly happened all over Europe, and especially in France in the last decade of the 19th century. We have then a

series of events on which the press was able to build the case that anarchy was equated with the detonation of bombs.

We start with Ravachol, a burglar and murderer who, in 1892, planted three bombs, against a judge, a state prosecutor and an Army Barracks. He was guillotined in 1893 when he was 33 and subsequently was recruited into the legend of the anarchist saints, even though his criminal history included the killing of an elderly hermit, solely for theft.

There was also Auguste Vaillant who, in December 1893, threw a bomb from the public gallery of the French Chamber of Deputies. Several people were injured but no one was killed because of the weakness of the device. As declared by Vaillant before the Court, the aim was to wound as many deputies as possible in revenge for the execution of Ravachol. He too was guillotined a few months later (3 February 1894).

To revenge the death of Auguste Vaillant, on 12 February 1894, Émile Henry detonated a bomb at the Terminus Café of the Gare Saint Lazare in Paris killing one person and injuring twenty others. Octave Mirbeau, a novelist with anarchist sympathies, wrote in that respect: "A mortal enemy of anarchy could have acted no better than this Émile Henry when he threw his inexplicable bomb into the midst of peaceful and anonymous persons come to a café to drink a glass of beer before going to bed...". The stupidity and inanity of the act was subsequently overshadowed by the courage and fearlessness with which he faced the legal process and later execution. And so, for some, Émile Henry became an anarchist hero.

On the 24th of June 1894, to revenge Auguste Vaillant and Émile Henry, Sante Geronimo Caserio stabbed to death the president of the French Republic, Sadi Carnot.

This series of acts of violence and retribution did nothing to reduce repression and advance personal freedom. On the contrary, the French Parliament introduced, in 1893-1894, *les lois scélérates* (the "villainous laws") that curtailed the freedom to express ideas and criminalized the entire anarchist movement.

In fact, the actions of violent individuals and the irrational

passions generated later by their execution by the state, were leading the anarchist movement nowhere or, more precisely, to a total trashing of the anarchist conception and towards even more absurd deeds and more unpalatable "heroes".

This was very much apparent in the stabbing to death of an anti-conformist defenceless lady on her way to board a steamship on the Lake of Geneva. Her name was Elisabeth and she happened to be the estranged spouse of the emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria. Her executioner, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1898, was Luigi Luccheni, a self-professed anarchist. Never has the propaganda by deed (those deadly deeds) appeared so senseless and so useless.

Finally, when the alleged anarchists of the Bande Bonnot engaged in their criminal actions (1911-1912) that became the pretext for the introduction of new repressive state laws, it was like reaching the final act of a farcical tragedy that would reduce anarchy to the act of banal robbery.

Parallel to this, the brief season of syndicalism in which, at the turn of the century, many anarchists found a new way to express their energies and the hope of realizing some of their aspirations, was weakened by the creation of a new myth, that of the revolutionary strike that would, at once, introduce the entire society to a new world. But the myth, as is the case of every myth, failed to materialize and many active anarchists or simply sympathizers started looking elsewhere for inspiration and action.

The First World War and the Russian Revolution, by deflecting the attention to other events and to other conceptions, eventually exposed very clearly the dead end reached by a movement once so rich in ideas and aspirations.

### **The exhaustion of the message**

The first two decades of the 20th century were characterized by a series of negative events for the anarchist movement, whose ideas and actions do not seem to have had much effect in preventing individ-

uals and groups from taking disastrous decisions and directions. We can point out to two main phenomena:

- The expansion and consolidation of imperialist states (i.e., England, France, Germany, Russia, Italy) and their military apparatus.
- The bureaucratization of the workers' movement under the control of power-hungry functionaries of the so-called "socialist" parties, divided by national lines.

When Gavrilo Princip shot the Archduke of Austria at Sarajevo and provided a pretext for the start of the butchery called First World War, we have the confirmation that:

- political violence is useless if not totally counterproductive especially in the presence of a killing machine called *the state* that will use those acts of violence to her own advantage.
- the individual has been superseded by the masses that have become just cannon fodder or tin soldiers, fully manipulated and totally dispensable, at the service of the power lust of the state rulers.

In 1918 Randolph Bourne declared openly "*War is the Health of the State*"; he could have very well said that all kind of violence and brutality is the invigorating tonic of the states.

The First World War represented a turning point for the anarchist movement that saw the ideas and actions of the surviving figures and groups, compressed, and eventually marginalized by two powerful forces that will be dominant for a large part of the 20th century:

- Nationalism. During the 19th century, while the attention of many was focused on movements like anarchism and socialism, a current of ideas much more powerful was to affirm itself after a long gestation: nationalism. "Nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century." (Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 1960). In order to become a pervasive reality, present in all the interstices of society, this doctrine needed a political entity and it found it, in the course of the same century, with the invention and foundation of nation states. Nationalism (national territorial statism) by unifying people sharing some common traits (especially the language) and a common myth (*democracy* as the legitimate right of the majority to

impose its will on everybody) was bound to be the ideology of all states, irrespective of what "ism" they were supposedly advocating and stating (capitalism, communism, fascism, etc.). And militarism was the necessary complement of nationalism, given the desire of state rulers to impose on everybody their specific brand of nationalism, inside and outside a specific territory. That is why we can call it "barrack nationalism".

- Communism. The Russian Revolution that occurred in 1917, attracted all those hopes that anarchists had been unable to kindle in the previous decades. However, soon all faded, at least amongst sincere anarchists, as it became clear that a new system of oppression and exploitation was in the making. Nevertheless, many others believed and accepted the idea that state dictatorship was only a brief necessary stage towards a future of freedom and material abundance. But the passage of time only confirmed the worst fears of the anarchists, many of them dying in Soviet prisons. Some of those who survived were afterwards capable of depicting the horrors of a state in which the guillotine was at work on a massive scale, to use the words of G. P. Maximoff, one of the best historians of the madness of "barrack communism" (G. P. Maximoff, *The Guillotine at Work. Twenty Years of Terror in Russia*, 1940).

At the end of the Great War and its nationalistic frenzy and after the establishment of the Communist State in Russia, the anarchist message appeared submerged and silenced by two other agendas:

- The Wilson Doctrine, propounded by the President of the USA Woodrow Wilson, that made the nation state the politically necessary way to organize society.

- The Lenin Practice, that made the totalitarian state the revolutionary necessary way to organize society.

These were both powerful signals and realities that demonstrated the failure of the anarchist message to get through and its growing irrelevance in the age of the masses. So, just when a free voluntary social organization (i.e., anarchy) would have been most needed, to avert future disasters (the Second World War, the Jews genocide, the

Russian Gulag etc.) the less chance it had to be envisaged and practiced.

Finally, a point was reached when we can say that anarchism as an international active movement was erased from history and only a few individuals remained (e.g., Max Nettlau, Errico Malatesta), as reclusive figures, trying to keep the historical heritage and the message alive for a hopeful revival in the future.

### **The erasure from history**

The 20th century can be characterized as the age of the masses, led by party rulers keen on inventing appealing myths based mainly on outright lies. Given this reality, no place and voice were left for autonomous and reasoning individuals and for a movement relying on them.

For this motive, between the end of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th century, we witness the erasure from history of the anarchist movement. This is caused by three main occurrences:

- The persecution of the individuals. The “propaganda by deed” resulted in the killing of common people as well as state presidents (Sadi Carnot in 1894 in France and William McKinley in 1901 in the USA at the hands of a presumed anarchist), prime ministers (Antonio Canovas in 1897 in Spain) and crown holders (Elisabeth of Bavaria in 1898 in Switzerland, Umberto I in 1900 in Italy). This resulted in a heavy-handed reaction by the state, which could count on an increasing popular revulsion to the use of similar methods for dismantling central power. As a matter of fact, the killing of state figures had generally the opposite effect, of rallying many people behind the government and the king. So, the state utilised this violence committed by some “anarchists” as a highly convincing pretext to attack and persecute the entire movement, even those that were not at all in sympathy with those methods. Then, as already previously pointed out, anarchists were put on trial (e.g., Louise Michel, Jean Grave, etc.), put in prison (e.g., Mikhail Bakunin, Pëtr Kropotkin, E. Armand, etc.), expelled from



various countries and forced to become fugitives from place to place (e.g. Errico Malatesta, Pietro Gori, etc.). In other words, they were made to suffer all sorts of oppression and harassment just because of their unrelenting aspiration to live as independent human beings.

- The withdrawal of the activists. In France, the disillusionment with the use of violence led many to engage in revolutionary syndicalism and, for some of them, this became the first step towards participating in the political and electoral struggle. In Italy a leading figure like Andrea Costa had already abandoned anarchism in 1879; he chose the socialism route, was elected to Parliament in 1882 and took part in the foundation of the Italian Workers Party (Genova, 1892) that four years later was to assume the name of Italian Socialist Party. In the USA there was the case of Victor Yarros, one of the most famous voices of individualist anarchism during the last decades of the 19th century that became, later, a supporter of the New Deal and an advocate of state intervention and state regulation. The First World War and the subsequent events can be considered as the turning point when many revolutionary syndicalists embraced fascism and national socialism finding in those movements a vent for their ambitions to action and power. Similarly, sympathizers or potential anarchists abandoned anti-militarism and turned to nationalism, or felt attracted by parties (socialist, communist, fascist) where the state was a very important political agent.

- The appropriation of the ideas. The abandonment of the anarchist camp also meant that other movements appropriated some of the ideas and symbols of anarchism. For instance, the idea of the "general strike" was taken up by fascist leaders for totally different ends (totalitarian state domination). The "March on Rome" by the fascists was, in a certain way, the implementation of a general strike aiming to replace the old power and install a new order of things. Fascism also grabbed the black flag that had been, up to then, the symbol of anarchy. To sum it up, the new emerging powers of communism, fascism, and national socialism, took some revolutionary slogans and symbols from the anarchist movement. They transformed it into rhetoric

verbiage and by a convenient make-over proceeded to strengthen the state to a level that had never been seen before.

The demise of the anarchist movement was nowhere so much evident than in the land of the “Socialist” Revolution, the Soviet Union. A few months after its eruption, the anarchists were already being persecuted politically and physically. Trotskij called them “bandits.” Under Lenin anarchism as a movement was disbanded and its activists put in prison or executed. Even Nestor Machno, the Ukrainian anarchist who fought the German and the Austrian forces with the approval of the Bolsheviks, was, in the end, liquidated when no longer found useful. Within a few years, the new communist power succeeded in eliminating the anarchist movement from Russian soil.

In the USA, the anarchists were involved and targeted whenever it was necessary to repress strikes, like in the famous Haymarket affair (1886) when somebody threw a bomb at the end of a demonstration, to which the police responded by opening fire and shooting to death various people, including some policemen. The anarchists were accused of it and four of them were executed, even though none of them had thrown the bomb, something conceded even by the prosecution. In another case, the famous trial leading to the execution (1927) of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, in which Vanzetti was almost certainly innocent of the crime he was accused of (murdering two men in an armed robbery), the anarchists were again used as a pretext for strengthening the power of the state.

The last spark of anarchism was ignited during the Spanish civil war (1936-1939) when combatants from Europe and America converged to fight against reaction. The Spanish experience is the condensation of some of the best and worst of historical anarchism, of his weaknesses, ambiguities, excesses, nobility, and final tragedy. During the war, half a million people are estimated to have died and not always at the hand of the opposite side. The anarchists were responsible for massacres against the Catholic clergy (7000 of them were killed by republican and anarchist activists), landowners and businessmen. In their turn, the anarchists suffered also at the hands

of the communists, who were supposed to be their allies in the fight against the Falangists. The anarchist Camillo Berneri, for instance, was killed by a communist squad in Barcelona during the tragic May Days of 1937.

The falling into obscurity and insignificance of anarchism was very well represented by Max Nettlau, the foremost historian of the anarchist movement. He spent the last years of his life in Amsterdam occupied by the Nazis, working undetected and so undisturbed to cataloguing his Anarchist Archive. He was a lone remnant of a great movement aspiring to self-promoted order and free human beings, in a world marked by utter disorder and captive individuals.

### **The impossible task of anarchism**

The falling of anarchism into oblivion and, in some respects, into disrepute, was due to internal and external reasons.

The internal reasons are quite obvious because a movement, open to everybody, especially to those dissatisfied and enraged by the current state of things, can easily become the magnet and the receptacle for all sorts of people ready to commit all sorts of excesses. Once absurd and counter-productive acts were committed, they were then condoned, implicitly or openly, because the violence perpetrated was interpreted as the anarchist reaction to violence suffered. Even a renowned figure like Bakunin could be fouled, for a while, by a sinister character like Nechayev, a fanatical fraud. This was because, in the mind of quite a few anarchists, the vision of the revolution as a conspiratorial violent upheaval was deeply rooted. And even the distancing by other anarchists from that vision and from the destructive acts committed in the name of anarchy was not sufficient, given the existence of a state and of a press eager to find a useful scapegoat to be blamed for all the violence.

As for the external reasons, these refer mainly to the fact that, by dominating the channels of education and information, the state succeeded in presenting the anarchists not only as disorderly and violent but also as naive and foolish. For instance, a criticism that was

and is continuously addressed to the anarchists in order to dismiss them outrightly, is that they are utopian dreamers, advocating a social organisation that might be possible only if society was solely composed of saints.

This distortion of the truly anarchist view of human nature is on a par with the abuse of stirring and advocating disorder addressed to people, the anarchists, whose ideas, as already remarked, flourished especially amongst the precision and order of the watch-making workshops and industries of the Swiss Jura.

The portrait of the human being held by anarchists like Kropotkin, and that is present, manifestly or implicitly, in the anarchist conception, is neither childishly optimistic nor idiotically pessimistic. It relies on:

- the perfectibility of the human being attained by practicing the best human inclinations, like that of sociability, compassion, and mutual aid.
- the corruptibility of the human being brought about by the cultivation of the worst human aspects, like envy and greed, and the concentration in a few hands of the most dangerous social factor, namely power.

As a matter of fact, the criticism of being infantile dreamers can in turn be addressed to those who advocate the existence of state rulers to implement order and quell violence. The anarchists, as just pointed out, were quite disenchanted with human nature. They were aware that any concentration of power, in any individual, can result in the corruption of that individual and his associates, with dire consequences in terms of order and peaceful social life. History has confirmed the worst fears of anarchists, with millions of people killed or maimed in state-promoted state-engineered wars, or using concentration camps, extermination plans, purges, mass expulsions and so on and so forth. Some ascribe the numbers of deaths at the hands of governments and with reference only to the 20th century, to the astonishing figure of well over 200 million individuals (see R. J. Rummel, *Statistics of Democide*, <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/NOTE5.HTM>)

That is why the criticism aimed at anarchists of being naïve, because they refuse to accept the concentration of power in the hands of the state rulers, appears dangerously and ludicrously senseless. And this is perfectly clear to those who have understood that what the anarchist oppose is not the establishment of order but the illusion that order can emerge by giving to one group of individuals inordinate amount of power and leaving the rest totally defenceless.

This has been very well expressed by John Dewey when he wrote:

"even the theoretical anarchist, whose philosophy commits him to the idea that state or government control is an unmitigated evil, believes that with the abolition of the political state other forms of social control would operate: indeed, his opposition to governmental regulation springs from his belief that other and to him more normal modes of control would operate with abolition of the state."  
(John Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 1938)

In other words, anarchism is not at all a utopian dream but a truly practical proposition that demands from everybody a modicum of:

- human rationality or the dismissal of myths and illusions: do not accept a-critically what you have been told.
- personal responsibility or the dismissal of parasitic behaviour: do not live on the back of others, do not let others pay for your faults.
- social reciprocity or the dismissal of social inconsistency: don't do to others what you don't want to be done to you, *do ut des* - give and receive.

However, in the presence of a mass society in which the central territorial state had succeeded in dominating and practically monopolising the formation processes and the information channels, as previously pointed out, the task of the anarchists in carrying on these basic aims was, given also the internal flaws of the movement, an impossible one.

That is why, in the place of human rationality, personal responsibility and social reciprocity we had:

- the manufacturing of mental superstitions and myths (for

instance democracy as the power of the people and the parliament as the voice of the citizens).

- the distribution of corruptive material hand-outs (for instance welfare payments) that keep individuals always dependent on the state.

- the obfuscation of moral principles (for instance national laws of the state, i.e. legality, replacing morality, i.e. moral values as universal norms of civility).

Clearly, to fall into the gutter of statism, cultivating the worst aspects of human nature as credulity, irresponsibility, and immorality, is a much easier task than ascending to the sensible plateau of anarchy. Nevertheless, human nature, although flexible and adaptable to almost everything, is also so rich in potentials and aspirations that it could get weary of living always in the gutter and might want to experience something different. Even from the gutter we can see the stars and that is why the process of personal emancipation is a never-ending one.

### **The necessary renewal of anarchism**

During that long period when anarchism was a very feeble light in the darkness and a voice, kept alive by individuals like E. Armand, Albert Jay Nock, Herbert Read, the principles of liberty were upheld by classical liberals like Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek, later to be grouped under the name of the Austrian School. In the United States one of them, Murray Rothbard, was to become a leading exponent of what he and others called anarcho-capitalism, a term that links the freedom of economic action intrinsic to original capitalism with the freedom of personal and social action more closely related to genuine anarchism.

Rothbard and others were instrumental in promoting and reinvigorating the debate about libertarianism (a word equivalent to anarchism but used more and more in preference to anarchism), writing seminal books (*For a New Liberty*, 1972; *The Ethics of Liberty*, 1982),

founding and animating a very stimulating review like the *Journal of Libertarian Studies* (1977).

Rothbard's intellectual and practical journey was also indicative of the end of old divisions that have characterised the anarchist movement, such as that between left and right, divisions that are continuously re-proposed only by people stuck in the past and willing to impose, with a totally anti-anarchic attitude, their own brand of a supposedly superior form of true "anarchism".

Anarchists or Libertarians resurfaced then in the 1960's and can be found contributing ideas and activists in a series of movements such as:

The movement for civil rights. It emerged during the nineteen-fifties in the USA a movement for black emancipation aimed at upholding the civil rights of black people against any discrimination. Even if what motivated and animated the participants in that movement was the affirmation of human dignity, without any specific ideological connotation, the struggle against the injustice of the power (segregation, harassment, violence) had a libertarian outlook. This aspect will be found, even more accentuated, in other movements that characterize the nineteen-sixties, in many parts of the world.

The student movement. Some of those, like Mario Savio, who participated in the civil rights march in Mississippi, were then to be found at the University of California, Berkley, setting up the Free Speech Movement through which the students claimed a voice in the decisions concerning their education. In Europe, the Mai '68 revolt in Paris with its libertarian atmosphere and provocative catchphrases (*Il est interdit d'interdire!* It is forbidden to forbid! - *L'imagination prend le pouvoir!* Imagination takes over!) showed, at least for a brief season, that anarchism could be a very lively and appealing conception. However, those that were attracted to it were not capable of sustaining it as a long-term strategy. So, when the leaders of the bureaucratic parties convened and gained monetary concessions by the state, the workers withdrew and the protest came, eventually, to an end.

The movement against the war in Vietnam. Another movement that

presented classic anarchist themes like the opposition to militarism and imperialism, was that against the war in Vietnam. Unfortunately, this became soon a struggle between two camps (pseudo-communism and pseudo-capitalism) and so the libertarian aspect quickly evaporated in favour of declaring sympathies and allegiance to one or the other side. This marked the end of the libertarian aspect of the movement. The anarchists then engaged in other themes in which libertarianism was to become a strong component.

The feminist movement. The Women's liberation movement of the nineteen-sixties continued the struggle for the emancipation and equal rights for women started in the 19th and continued in the 20th century, with the contribution of anarchists like Voltairine de Cleyre and Emma Goldman. The feminist movement, by questioning also authoritarian relationships within presumed progressive or even libertarian groups, has provided a salutary lesson for many and can then be really seen as anarchist in its attitudes and aims, even if not in its specific declarations.

The ecological and communitarian movement. The movement that best condensed and expressed the anarchist outlook and practice was the one that promoted all sorts of alternative technologies and alternative lifestyles. The inspiration and manifestations of this movement can be found in the writings of authors like Murray Bookchin, Ivan Illich, Colin Ward, and those around two famous Reviews and Projects: *Whole Earth Review* with the various *Whole Earth Catalogs*, 1968-1994 (Steward Brand, Kevin Kelly, Howard Rheingold, and many others) and *Undercurrents* with the *Radical Technology Catalogue*, 1976 (Godfrey Boyle, Peter Harper, and many others). The Centre for Alternative Technology started in Wales in 1973 can also be allied with the same vision.

In most cases, many of the participants in those movement were not aware of the roots, developed by previous anarchist thinkers and practitioners, that underpinned what they were fighting for. However, this is not a sign of weakness but of strength of the anarchist conception because it means that its validity goes well beyond the limited sphere from which it evolved.



The reappearance of anarchism, after its relinquishment and almost obliteration, is then a proof of the everlasting value of its aspirations and of the rich variety of its positions.

### **The everlasting value of anarchism**

The re-emergence of anarchism is due to the presence, within that concept, of some aspects that are valid in all ages and that are particularly capable of being implemented in our time in which the technology of communication and production is well advanced.

In fact, the more developed individuals and communities are, the more they are ripe for self-governments, i.e. anarchy. This notion is not new, as we can find it already expressed by Thomas Paine when he wrote:

“The more perfect civilization is, the less occasion has it for government, because the more does it regulate its own affairs, and govern itself.” (Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, 1872)

In the current historic epoch, the collapse of the Soviet Union (centralised state collectivism) and the crisis affecting the United States of America (bureaucratic state corporatism) are a stark reminder that societies are not something that can be mastered and guided by an all-powerful all-knowledgeable ruling group. This is because:

- there is no such thing as a fully knowledgeable élite to be followed as enlightened disinterested experts.
- there is no such thing as a uniform block of people called society to be guided as a flock of passive sheep.

Moreover, if such things have been made quite possible, until recently, by the invention and use of ideologies having homogenizing effects on many (e.g. nationalism, communism) and of apparatuses which have a subjugating effect on all (the state army, the state police, mass-education for state indoctrination, mass-media for state propaganda, etc.), nowadays this is no longer possible given the

existence of a variety of channels of personal communication and action.

The post-industrial society is based on

- automation: the freeing of many producers from alienating and debilitating tasks with wide potential effects for those wanting a less demeaning and a more meaningful life.
- cybernation: the multiplication of feed-back and feed-forward effects from all the participants in the social complex and not just from the ruling strata.
- communication: the instantaneous spreading of information in which each individual is a potential producer and receiver on a global scale.

All this is making possible personal empowerment and stimulating the desire for self-realization by many individuals. Even in communities not so technologically advanced, any attempt to keep people silent and obedient to a central power is an illusion of the past.

In many senses, the post-industrial society has made it possible to implement the demands and aspiration of the anarchist movement, transforming them into normal technological possibilities and daily personal choices, devoid of specific references to any past revolutionary platform. Revolutionary demands become then plain common reality. This can be seen for instance in the spreading of:

- Direct action: the presence of mediators and intermediary stages is replaced by people's direct intervention in many spheres of production of goods and utilisation of services, in such a way that the individual can take a direct control, as advocated by anarchists, of how and when to take his decisions and implement his choices.
- Appropriate dimensions: the gigantism of past ages has given way to greatly reduced dimensions (miniaturization) on a more human scale (physically and socially). This is more closely related to the development of workshops, cottage industries and small free communities as advocated by some anarchists like Kropotkin.
- Spontaneous order: the complexity of social relationships and of social networks makes not only impossible but even absurd the

thinking of an order imposed from the top and re-proposes the idea of spontaneous order arising from a myriad of small, reciprocal, and continuous personal and social adjustments. This represents the very basic idea of anarchism.

The symbol of anarchy is an A inscribed in a circle that represents the letter O for order. This is the recurrent message of all truly anarchists from Anselme Bellegarrigue to our days: Anarchy is Order, and we could add, spontaneous voluntary order based on the principle of non-aggression.

Sometimes this message has not been truly accepted even by some self-professed anarchists, who have taken the rich variety of positions characterizing the movement and the lack of prohibitions as a pretext for supporting some unsavoury aspects and actions presented under the label of anarchism.

Let us now look at the various positions expressed by the anarchist movement, their meaning and worth, and what can be made of them, and if they can all be included under the concept of anarchism.

### **The various positions of anarchism**

The freedom that characterises anarchy as a means and as an end, has allowed the emergence of various practices and views, stressing one aspect or the other, according to the specific value-choices made by each individual, in a free voluntary manner.

This variety of positions can be perhaps subsumed under three main headings:

Anarcho-communism. In the early period of anarchism, the difference between anarchists and socialists was only in the methods and means adopted for achieving freedom and equality (i.e., the end of state restrictions and privileges). So, in practice, they were all socialists in the sense that they were all in favour of social ownership of the means of production. However, some of them like Bakunin, did not use the word communism as it was tainted by the notion of the necessity, even if temporarily, of state centralization (as promoted by Marx, at least up to a certain period), preferring the term collectivism.

Bakunin's collectivism is a voluntary form of collaborative production in which everyone receives a return in recognition of his working contribution to the common activity. Others, like Proudhon, used the word mutualism to describe the voluntary coming together of individuals with a view to achieving common production and reciprocal assistance. Kropotkin thought the expression "anarchist communism" appropriate to portray his ideas on social organization. When the term "communism" was used, it was always in the sense of voluntary acceptance of producing and sharing, with no central authority in charge of planning production and distribution. The aspiration to achieve a voluntary anti-authoritarian communism was also based on the conviction that technology required a socialised form of production, and that scientific progress would increase enormously the amount of goods produced, so that everybody could obtain, from the general pool, what was necessary for a decent living. Even if some expectations have proved over optimistic because certain resources are limited, the basic idea of anarcho-communism can be successful and fully viable, for instance, in the area of information and communication. Science, as remarked by Karl Merton (*The Sociology of Science*, 1973), is a communistic activity and the free sharing of information through the world network (World Wide Web) has the characteristics and aims envisaged by some anarcho-communists in the past.

Anarcho-individualism. With the growing dominance, especially during the first half of the 20th century, of totalitarianism in its various forms (state communism, fascism, national socialism), the form of anarchism that came to play a significant role was the one that runs through the entire history of anarchy, from Max Stirner to the present day, namely that of anarcho-individualism. Under this appellation we find all those individuals that are against any sort of imposition concerning personal choices and matters, made not only by the state but also by anyone, in the name of society, religion, science, progress and other, more or less appealing, pretexts. One of the most consistent individualist anarchists was E. Armand whose activities and writings span several decades. Within this conception

we can include somebody, like David Thoreau, who did not use the term anarchist to qualify himself but acted in a way that expressed all the best aspects and motivations of individual anarchism. Also, the anarchism of Tolstoy and of others like Dorothy Day, inspired by a religious sentiment, can be subsumed under anarcho-individualism because of their remarkable stress on the importance and worth of the human being.

Anarcho-capitalism. The terrible misdeeds associated with the term communism and the will to recover the spirit of free trade and free enterprise could be accounted for the loss of favour of anarcho-communism and the ascendancy of a current of ideas and practices that Murray Rothbard is credited to have called anarcho-capitalism. The core conviction of Rothbard and others is that the state is a monopolistic illegitimate institution that should be got rid of even in the field of personal security and protection. Everything can then be carried out through personal contracts and voluntary organizations. This position was first put forward by classical liberals like Gustave de Molinari (*De la production de la sécurité*, 1849) and extended by Paul-Émile de Puydt (*Panarchie*, 1860) who puts forward the revolutionary idea of governments in competitions, like business companies vying for customers, on the pattern of socio-economic *laissez-faire laisser-passer*. In doing so Paul-Émile de Puydt goes clearly beyond anarcho-capitalism. Those strains of anarcho-capitalism that stress voluntarism and the overcoming of monopolies of any type (first of all the territorial monopoly of the state) are clearly part of the anarchist movement if we overcome silly preconceptions like that between left and right (anarchism being supposedly a movement of the left and anarcho-capitalism a movement of the right) and fake oppositions like that between public and private property (anarchism being supposedly a movement in favour of a not well-specified public property and anarcho-capitalism a movement in favour of a so-called private property, public and private being both state-invented categories).

The variety of the positions that have been adopted can be seen as a quality of anarchism in the sense that it includes and accepts all

the many forms of personal and social organisation, each one freely and voluntarily chosen by their advocates and practitioners. However, the pseudo-anarchists that have deeply absorbed the unidimensional mono-cultural worldview of statism, are incapable of dealing with variety and have always been trying to impose their own brand of "anarchism" (usually anarcho-communism in the past and perhaps anarcho-capitalism in the future) completely oblivious and ignorant of the fact that the only "ism" that should be favoured and practised by all is voluntarism.

For this reason, to the ones previously listed, a further position should be added, that goes by the name of:

Anarchism without adjectives. This expression was first introduced by Fernando Tarrida del Mármol in 1889 in Barcelona to go beyond the division between communist anarchists and collectivist anarchists and favour a more open and more inclusive approach. This position was reiterated by Voltairine de Cleyre in her essay *Anarchism* (1901) in which she declares that "Anarchism means freedom to the soul as to the body, - in every aspiration, every growth." And from that it follows that "Each choose that method which expresses your selfhood best, and condemn no other man because he expresses his Self otherwise." This position of acceptance of different forms of social organization can be found also in the writings of Max Nettlau, especially in the essay *Panarchie. Eine verschollene Idee von 1860* [Panarchy. A Forgotten Idea of 1860] (1909). It has been re-affirmed by Karl Hess in a famous article with a title that could not be more explicit: *Anarchism without Hyphens* (1980)

Nevertheless, even in our time, there is a conviction that there are anarchist positions that are more anarchist than others and that it is those that must be upheld (if not imposed) to the detriment of all the others that are either non-anarchist or not anarchist enough.

If this attitude remains dominant, perhaps the best way out is to abandon the formal use of all the "isms" produced in the past, (anarchism included) while salvaging the fundamental perennial values and messages that are present in them (and especially in anarchism).

It is then time to stress, even more, voluntarism and pluralism

and go beyond anarchism/antianarchism. Let us see how this can be achieved.

### **Beyond anarchism and antianarchism**

Going beyond anarchism and antianarchism means to leave behind the ineptitudes, ingenuousness or sheer idiocies of some anarchists or pretended anarchists (past and present) and refresh the everlasting core of the anarchist conception and practices.

The best way to do so is to integrate the anarchist vision and aspiration with a scientific outlook and approach so that, in the end, we are no longer dealing with objectives (the implementation of anarchy) held by a specific group of people (the anarchists) but with a framework (the freedom to live one's own life) that is acceptable to all in so far as it is the moral pre-requisite for being humans (presence of responsibly assumed choices) and the scientific premise for the existence of a human society (absence of oppression that generates clashes)

However, to do so, we should, first, get rid of two pathologies that are deeply imbedded in the minds of many individuals (of "anarchists" and "antianarchists" alike):

- the mission pathology: the idea that the mission of revolutionary individuals is to change the world with a total unique solution and once for all.

- the missionary pathology: the idea that there are missionaries (the proletariat, the party, the left, the entrepreneurs, the scientists, etc.) that are the engine of this total catharsis.

Missions and missionaries should be replaced by:

- sensible persons: the protagonist of self-liberation is each single reasoning and willing human being.

- practical projects: the path of self-liberation is the setting up of autonomous fruitful initiatives and projects that liberate productive energies and creativity.

A liberation process, whatever the background of ideas that inspire it, should be founded on the basic principle that is common to

science and to morality, i.e. consistency. Specifically, the consistency required is that between:

- Ends-Means. If authoritarian power is based on violence, the antiauthoritarians cannot use violence as part of their strategy unless they want to replicate the worst aspects of the power they want to abolish. In other words, authoritarian means cannot be employed for libertarian ends.

- Ideas-Actions. If authoritarian power is based on lofty empty words (democracy, popular sovereignty, public interest, etc.) the anti-authoritarian expresses, through very practical projects and self-liberating actions, his/her libertarian ideas.

- Unity-Variety. If the authoritarian power is based on massification (uniformity) and confrontation (antagonism), the antiauthoritarian is for the harmony (unity) of differences (variety) and so for the polyvalent multi-dimensional individual.

These three manifestations of consistency are indispensable both in the practice of science and in the liberation process. That is why liberation is a scientific activity that goes beyond any specific ideology or label (political, economic, or other) attached to it.

Now, as ever, the task is to advance science because, in so doing, we advance the liberation process. But science is not or not just, as many think, the activity performed in laboratories by people in white overall, paid to produce ideas and discoveries that we all will accept and consume. This journalistic idea of science has never been true in its entirety and is not at all true in our time when genial ideas and products have come out from people tinkering in their garage or university dormitory.

Science, like Art, is the domain of every individual keen on experimenting and expressing new ideas. For this reason, life is a scientific and artistic endeavour or, in other words, is made of many scientific experiments and artistic expressions. When this simple fact will be accepted in every-day life and when social experiments and artistic expressions will be part and parcel of the existence of individuals and communities, the term anarchism will disappear because, without even thinking of it, we will all be practising it.



On the 1st of May 1919, the anarchist and pacifist Gustav Landauer was arrested by men at the order of Gustav Noske, the Minister of Defence of the German state, and a member of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). A day later, in Munich's Stadelheim Prison, he was killed in the most atrocious way, by crushing his head by battering it with musket butts. His major crime was to have provided everybody with one of the best analyses of what the state is and what should be made to be done with it. In *Weak Statesmen, Weaker People!* (1910) he wrote that the state is not something that one can smash in order to destroy it.

"The state is a social relationship, a certain way human beings relate to each other. It can be destroyed by creating new social relationships, by human beings relating to each other differently." (Gustav Landauer, 1910)

And to generate new satisfying personal and social relationships amongst free individuals and voluntary communities is the never-ending task of all human beings, beyond anarchism and antianarchism.

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<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/special/index/>

The Libertarian Labyrinth

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Robert Graham's Anarchism Weblog

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Archives Autonomies (Français)

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## TERRORISM / ANTITERRORISM

The ruler and the ruled  
The resolute ruler: the need for a villain  
The reluctant ruled: the alien as villain  
The function of the villain  
The fight against the villain  
Villains: the old targets  
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Intolerance (terrifying intolerance)  
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The function of terrorism  
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The war to promote war  
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References



## The ruler and the ruled

**T**he human being is a cooperative/competitive animal.

Cooperation can over-extend itself and, in a sense, degenerate into passive compliance (submission) while competition can be over-stretched and subverted to the point of becoming aggressive coercion (dominion).

The healthy and fully functioning human being is the one who is willing and capable to display both the aspects of cooperation and competition in his/her daily activities without being drawn by either of its degenerate states.

Unfortunately, in the course of history some people have fallen prey to the exclusive attraction of one or the other of these two positions, sometimes in their extreme form.

This has given rise to the roles of rulers and ruled that have crystallized into social positions of dominion and submission.

The dynamics of dominion and submission is a subtle one. For instance, in order to expect submissive deference a ruler needs to show that he has some quality (strength, deftness, confidence, etc.) in abundance with respect to the common people and that he is ready and capable of using those qualities in order to lead them out of peril whenever the situation demands it.

This explains the pre-eminence given in most places and at most times to warriors and their bravery. A sign of this is the fact that many towns in Switzerland are embellished by statues that celebrate the glory of knights and fighters.

However, while in the case of Switzerland, occasional figures emerged to repel aggressors and invaders and, in the process, led to the formation of a Confederation of Cantons (*la Confédération Helvétique*), in other cases temporary leaders became permanent rulers with a different agenda.

Most of these permanent rulers achieved their position through a policy of continuous aggression and expansion; the people who came under their rule were, often, inhabitants of conquered and annexed territories, in other words people subjugated by force.

In this case a submissive deference could not be taken for granted. It required a continuous effort of manipulation and coercion.

At all times and in all places, the most effective tool for extracting and enforcing submission on a voluntary basis was the hinting at internal or external dangers, especially in the form of wars. And situations of danger have been occurring regularly in the course of history, as the most reckless or greedy rulers were always eager to fight their ways right to the top, craving for the control of larger and larger territories, from relatively small estates to vast states.

As it was soon discovered, there is nothing more beneficial for strengthening the power of a ruler than a victorious war or a war-like or quasi-war situation.

The states of the western world, especially the European states, reached their heights of power and prestige towards the end of the 19th century when they were waging and, generally, winning wars against people with less efficient fighting tools (in Africa and in Asia). The western rulers were so successful in this policy based on militarism and imperialism that, at the beginning of the 20th century, 13 western states were sharing amongst themselves almost the entire world and seven European states were controlling practically all of Africa and many territories in Asia.

Another period of strength for state rulers was the second half of the 20th century when there emerged a system of alliances in which war was always in the air but rarely in the act. During the period of the so-called cold war two super states dominated the world and the rulers of other states were safe in their position as long as they granted allegiance to one or the other of these superpowers, promising political or military support for an (almost) unwaged war.

### **The resolute ruler: the need for a villain**

What has been said so far lead us to a very important point, namely the fact that rulers (as opposed to administrators/managers of a firm) have a congenital need for an enemy. Their power and prestige and sometimes their existence and survival as leaders derives and relies



on the presence of one or many enemies. This exigency was expressed with lucidity by one of the most pompous but, occasionally, also perceptive state rulers of the 20th century, with the bombastic statement: "Many enemies, much honour" (Benito Mussolini).

The presence of an enemy has, almost automatically and from the start, a threefold result:

- rallies people under one flag
- reduces internal tensions
- reinforces obedience to the ruler.

In general, the existence of an enemy reminds people continuously of the ever-present danger and makes them grateful to the ruling power for the promised protection.

For this reason the state, that is the impersonal organization of the ruling élites, needs, at least from time to time, to act in a fighting mood. This could manifest itself as

- flexing its muscles against a weak (external) enemy
- filling its mouth with curses against a fake (internal) enemy.

The need for an enemy seems to apply to any state that has reached a certain size in terms of population, which is fed with daily doses of chauvinist and alarmist messages, for one reason or the other.

All these aspects represent the preliminary conditions for fighting the enemy. But fighting the enemy requires, needless to say, the preliminary manufacturing of a target: the villain.

### **The reluctant ruled: the alien as villain**

As previously stated, in the course of history rulers have manufactured villains. Those villains have been either inhabitants of other territories who did not want to submit or some individuals living in the territory who were showing too much autonomy or were aspiring to too much freedom.

These two fronts, the external and the internal, have coexisted

since and will exist, at least for as long as power is based on exclusive territorial sovereignty.

In the 19th century, the state, the new consolidated impersonal ruler, had two main villains:

- all the other states which were competing, with the use of force, for the acquisition of territories. The result was state imperialism, that is each major state annexing territories and subjugating people.
- all the internal groups that were competing with the state for the minds and souls of those living in a bordered territory. The result was state monopolism, that is the state expropriating religious and civil societies of their power and regulating most expressions of people's life (social, economic, cultural, educational, etc.).

During the 20th century, the confrontation with these external and internal (manufactured) villains has gone on continuously and has resulted in wars, genocides, concentration camps, mass migrations, detention in prisons or mental institutions, expropriations of wealth, and many more crimes and misdeeds.

If we have to find a common denominator for a person or a group likely to be chosen as a villain, it could be summed up in a single word: alien.

The villain is considered an alien, an outsider, that is a menacing presence, and an intruder who could be/become a trouble-maker; for this reason he/she is targeted for repressive action that can range from exclusion to extermination.

The era of national statism (second half of 19th century and 20th century) is characterized by the dominion of the masses and by the tyranny of the majority. Might is right and national uniformity is the essential requirement for being part of a society dominated and shaped by the state. For this reason, the aliens, that is the chosen villains, have been individuals and groups with strong and strange personalities, soloists who did not play the tune imposed by the state choirmaster. They were:

- The ethnic minorities. We refer here to Armenians, Kurds, Jews or any group speaking a minority language, professing a minority faith, practicing minority customs or showing any other distinctive sign,

small or big, real or fictitious. The best they could expect from the state was to be encouraged to go back to some supposed original place of provenance to make room for the national majority (e.g. as for the German-speaking minority in South Tyrol under fascism). An alternative was to pack and leave. This was easier said than done. To the question how many Jews the Canadian government was ready to let enter the country to escape the persecutions of the German national socialist state, a senior official replied: « None is too many. » [1983, Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933–1948*]

So, when no territorial power was willing to open its (artificial) border, the remaining solution, to which the persecuted minorities were left to, was the final solution: extermination. And this is what happened to the Armenians under the Turkish state (one and half million massacred) and to the Jews under the German state (six million gassed and incinerated).

- The political minorities. Anarchists and socialists have been the perfect villains, at least when they promoted a message based on anti-authoritarianism and internationalism. According to their basic, original principles, anarchists and socialists do not have a nation state to which they should pay respect and allegiance. For this reason alone, they are dangerous outsiders. The state has succeeded in transforming the word anarchist into a derogatory term that evokes images of chaos and violence even if the most outstanding anarchists (like Kropotkin and Malatesta) do not fit that portrait at all.

- The cultural minorities. The nation state is based on and derives its rationale from the existence of the division between nationals and foreigners. Foreigners are those alien people who have been (generally) indoctrinated to pay allegiance to another nation state. Besides them, even more dangerous, are cosmopolitan groups who disdain narrow-minded national outlooks or those local communities who want to preserve their language and culture. The nation state is at odds with both of them and employs all sorts of repressive measures. To give just an example, the French state has, for many decades, forbidden the use of the Corse language in order to promote a

national identity based on a national language. Uniformity was to be achieved at all costs.

The fury of the state has been directed against these minorities who have sometimes replied with isolated acts of violence to the systematic use of repressive acts by the state. In doing so they have, usually, made the state repression even harsher and have played even more into the hands of the state, providing a justification for being labelled and targeted as villains. They have been generally trapped in a vicious circle, performing a specific function congenial to the maintenance of the state power.

### **The function of the villain**

In the course of history both the concept of the alien and that of the villain have been manufactured by the rulers (in our age the state rulers) in order to perform specific functions.

A power organization based on territorial sovereignty (over land and people) relies and acts through three main categories and their related factors seen in stark opposition:

- Ranks: the rulers - the ruled
- Borders: inside - outside
- Labels: we - they.

Those who do not agree with this paradigm, who do not feel part of the flock (i.e. the dissenters) or who are not, according to the state laws, part of the native flock (i.e. the foreigners), are likely to be labelled as villains and to be used by the state in order to perform two functions indispensable for its survival and strengthening:

- to arouse insecurity (likely outcome: the herd under threat gives up freedom and follows the current rulers)
- to instil conformity (likely outcome: the herd under threat closes ranks and follows the imposed rules).

Sometimes, even in the presence of a weak power, there are groups or individuals that carry out some violent actions that bring fear/terror amongst some sections of the populace. The declared intentions behind these acts, attributed (rightly or wrongly) to the

villains, is to provoke the reaction of the state that is then obliged to show its true face, that of a repressive and violent power. According to certain political beliefs, this repressive reaction by the state would bring about a resolute rebellion by the oppressed class that will finally get rid of the oppressor.

Usually, in this discourse, the state is seen as subservient to the economic interests of the wealthy élite and so it is not the state in itself that needs to be fought but a specific government that needs to be replaced.

This reasoning is totally functional to the permanence of state power. In fact, it joins cannily two apparently opposing figures:

- the useful idiot: the unhealthy/self-deceiving mind who totally ignores how social changes take place and how personal freedom is gained and thinks that if only he were in charge, the state would be magically transformed into an instrument of liberation;
- the deceitful meddler: the unhealthy/self-aggrandizing mind who knows, from history, that for a weak state the only way to regain strength and maintain power is to gamble and employ the ever so useful figure of the villain.

The basic archetype is that of the children's tales where the fear of the unknown is compounded by the occurrence of terrible feats attributed to a terrible monster. At that point the intrepid knight (i.e. a powerful entity) intervenes to destroy the monster and to restore security (i.e. law and order).

If this is the theoretical scenario, the actual reality is more complicated and requires to be examined a bit deeper.

### **The fight against the villain**

The reality concerning the villain and the fight against him conducted by the state (police, army, manipulated media, etc.) usually relies on three aspects that are here examined in sequence but take place all at the same time and are supposed to reinforce each other.

- Infiltration/Provocation. The villain does not come out of the blue; it needs to be nurtured and, sometimes, even manufactured if it fails

to appear. One of the most famous examples is that of the *Boevaya Organisatsia*, a terrorist organization in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century, whose leader Azev, and many members, were police agents [1999, Walter Laqueur]. In more recent times, it has emerged that a fifth (40 out of 200) of the leaders and main activists of the neo-Nazi party in Germany (the NPD) were agents of the secret service. But the classic case in history is represented by the anarchist movement that, almost from the start, was full of infiltrators inciting violent and senseless actions. In fact, provocation is useful and necessary when the villain has been manufactured/identified and a pretext is needed to start repression. History is peppered with experiences of agents provocateurs who instigated acts of violence in order to provide the justification for the introduction of measures restrictive of freedom.

- Alienation/Distortion. At the same time that the alien as villain is manufactured or pushed to action through provocation, the propaganda machine must be in full swing promoting alienation. Alienation means having a distorted image of reality conducive to suspicion and intolerance towards other communities and individuals. Alienation could be seen as the process of producing alienated people who believe in the existence of aliens (i.e. strangers/foreigners). A proper perception of and reflection upon reality should, on the contrary, warn us that the so called "aliens" are individuals like us, with the basic physical traits and needs like us, sometimes with human qualities (sensitivity, adaptability, generosity) even more developed than average people.

- Repression/Exclusion. The instinctive reaction that the state wants people to have against the supposed villain is exclusion. They become the pariah, excluded by any contact (the Jews in the ghetto), subjected to strict control (fingerprints for individuals from other countries), and towards whom there is a policy of "stop or shot" at the state border. Repression by the state could be directed towards an entire ethnic group (or what is perceived as an ethnic group) and reach a frenzy that leads to what has been called, with a surgical euphemism, ethnic cleansing, that is expulsion or extermination.

The same tactics, only with reduced clout, are employed by terrorist groups fighting a state power, either to establish a new state (e.g. the Jews with respect to the British forces in Palestine) or to install a new government. In these cases also, there have been episodes of infiltrators in government agencies (the moles), or distortion of reality in order to give a noble justification to ignoble actions. And there have been occurrences where the supposed liberation or revolutionary movements have committed atrocities against defenceless people (e.g. the Vietcong killing some 10,000 village elders in the late '50s and early '60s; the Algerian GIA exterminating the inhabitants of entire villages; terrorist groups in Latin America exploiting and massacring civilians in rural areas).

The terrorist activities of the state or of the anti-state are both motivated by the desire for state power (i.e. maintaining/strengthening state power or gaining access to state power). In that respect they are the two faces of the same coin, and for this reason the same discourse applies to both of them. In other words, political terrorism is essentially state generated and state oriented, in the sense that state power is the objective also of those who engage in terrorist acts against the state.

### **Villains: the old targets**

The march of statism has been characterized by the presence of villains, many of them more invented than real, at least in relation to the survival of the state. In fact, if we exclude the anarchists and the anarchist movement, the fight between the state and its villains has been an internal fight, that is a fight between different forms of statism, in which the one who lost became the despicable villain and the one who won transformed itself into the respectable guy.

The history of (modern) statism in Europe can be seen as a three-fold fight between:

- laicism (secular statism) vs. clericalism (theocratic statism)

- socialism (well-mannered statism) vs. fascism (violent statism)
- capitalism (paternalistic affluent statism) vs. communism (dictatorial backward statism).

The labels have not much meaning and certainly not their original meaning (as in the case of capitalism and communism) but are here employed for conventional understanding.

Focusing attention on the chapter of statism characterized by the fight between so called capitalism and so called communism, the first aspect to notice is that this conflict has performed very useful functions for rulers on both side of the (supposed) divide.

On the capitalist side it has given to the state (i.e. the politicians, the military and the bureaucratic personnel) enormous power and an enormous share of resources. With the excuse of fighting in order to protect the "free world," the original free spirit of capitalism has been crushed to death under a mass of state regulations and restrictions. Only the term 'capitalism' has survived and it is still being used for reasons of propaganda because it is a better label than statism, more apt to convey feelings of freedom and autonomy and more handy at distracting attention from state crimes and misdeeds.

On the communist side, the menace (real or invented) coming from the capitalist world permitted a totalitarian, militaristic and bureaucratic regime, hopeless at producing and distributing goods, to survive for more than 70 years and to pass away only because of internal exhaustion. In order to die it had to reach a state in which it was totally out of touch with reality, with geriatric leaders good for publicizing an old people's home more than a new socialist paradise (that never came).

While exchanging accusations and portraying each other as the real villain, both statisms, under the fake name of capitalism and communism, were giving each other full rein in each respective area of dominance. Tensions appeared only when a country within a certain area wanted to switch allegiance (e.g. Cuba) or become autonomous (e.g. Czechoslovakia). Otherwise, it was business as



usual, with the more advanced form of statism (USA) trading, when convenient, with the countries having the backward form of statism (Soviet Union and satellites countries), helping them with delivery of grains or concessions of loans.

Unfortunately (for statism), this balance of dominion and subjugation came to an end with the collapse of "communist" regimes and the disappearance of the Soviet Union.

On 9 November 1989 the Berlin wall disappeared as a border and very soon the communist bloc, one of the recognized villains by western rulers, went out of the scene. Taken by the enthusiasm of the moment, not many people in positions of state power realized immediately that new villains had to be manufactured as soon as possible if the future of the state, that is the positions of power and privilege of state rulers and state followers, were to be secured for many years and decades to come.

### **Villains: the new targets**

With the passing of the Soviet Union, the "evil empire" of American propaganda, some scholars even dared to proclaim that we had reached the end of history. In fact, what we were approaching was the end of the totalitarian role played by the state and of most ideological justifications underpinning it.

The sudden disappearance of one of the contending sides meant that the (potential) threat to security had melted away and so it was possible and necessary to slash military budgets and to pull down barriers to the circulation of people. In the USA around 300,000 defence jobs disappeared within less than two years from the fall of the Berlin wall [1993, Alvin and Heidi Toffler]. For some this was just the beginning of enjoying the so-called peace dividends.

But no dividends were in view for those who had built their fortunes on the communist menace as the bastions of anti-communism, like the military, the industries working for the military, or some political parties. Their future became suddenly bleak.

Books started to be written and talks to be given about the decline

and disappearance of the state. At that point the ruling élites of the nation states had to seriously examine their shaky predicament.

The nation state had to find a new role for itself. The simplest way is always to update the old role, that is that of being/appearing the supreme protector of people, the indispensable guarantor of their security, the general dispenser of law and order. This requires the manufacturing of new villains.

The operation has started at the beginning of the 21st century through a series of replacement targets, the main ones being:

- fundamentalism: the word clericalism, long gone out of fashion, has been substantially revived and formally replaced by the word fundamentalism.
- terrorism: the word communism has become unserviceable and has been replaced by the word terrorism.

Through this double shift of targets, the nation state is back or, at least, it presumes and intends to be back in business, regaining a role and a justification for its existence that seemed fast disappearing.

Let us now examine fundamentalism and terrorism seen as intolerance (terrifying intolerance) and violence (terrifying violence); these are not at all new phenomena but have been interlaced throughout with the history of statism.

### **Intolerance (terrifying intolerance)**

The use of religion as a political tool is an old trick of statism. In the past, the kings used God and religion as a justification for their power because both, God and religion, had a powerful grip on the minds and hearts of people. So, by claiming to act in the name of God or with the spiritual blessing of religion, the rulers could more effectively hold and exert their terrestrial power.

With the progress of secularization, that can be dated at least from the French Revolution, the masses appeared on the scene and dethroned God and religion from its central role. Since then, the will of the people (democracy) has replaced the will of God as the foundation and justification for any power. What now counts most, to this

end, is to court the favour of a large chunk (a majority) of the populace.

Politics has then taken the place previously occupied by religion in shaping and subduing the minds and wills of the people.

Fundamentalism is here taken as the use of politics as religion (blind faith); it is not, like in the past, a religion serving secular political ends, but totalitarian politics (that is politics covering all aspects of life) hidden behind a religious phraseology and fervour.

One of the clearest expressions of fundamentalism have been some leading currents of the French Revolution when Reason was made a Goddess and the statues of Saints were decapitated. That was a signal that the masses and fanatic politics had replaced the Catholic Mass and religious fervour.

What followed has been an unstoppable taking over of society by state politics and the transformation of state politics into a new religion, with its rites (mass meetings), its symbols (the national flag), its hymns (the national anthem), its saints (patriotic heroes), its magic words and formulas (democracy, national interest, public good, etc.), its selling of indulgences (terrestrial prebends and favours).

During the 20th century, through fascism, national socialism and communism as its most acute expressions and also through welfarism and dirigism, the state has perfected politics as the new religion, in many cases more inquisitorial and more totalitarian than the old one, certainly more factually pervasive and interfering than anything that ever appeared before.

Politics as the new religion is the fundamentalism of the Western states. It has become more and more aggressive and intrusive and it is being rivalled by another fundamentalism.

Long ago, when the Catholic Church was still a big political power, it thought necessary to embark on the adventures of the crusades as a way to strengthen the faith and to expand its message and its power amongst the infidels. Contrary to its expectations, the Church came out of these undertakings weakened and in decline.

At the beginning of the 21st century some Western states have embarked on new crusades to reinforce their sagging fortunes. They

are likely to undergo the same destiny of decadence that befell the Church.

The new crusade is against Muslim fundamentalism.

This so-called Muslim fundamentalism is a different phenomenon from the one in the West. While Western political fundamentalism is internal to state power, Muslim fundamentalism is a reaction to a state power seen as degenerate and corrupt. In many Muslim countries, religious centres (the Mosques) and religious practices have been the only places and ways through which it has been possible to vent popular discontent against autocratic rulers supported by the major Western states. This deep discontent and rage of the Islamic people was also born out of the horrors of the Afghan wars, the carnage of Bosnia Herzegovina, the destructions in Chechnya, the annexation of Palestine, to list only some of the cases in which Muslims have undergone atrocious sufferings.

Behind every episode there is a state: the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union central state, the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia Herzegovina by the Serb state (but not the only one), the razing of Grozny by the Russian state, the dispossession of Palestine by the Israeli state. If we add the selling of arms to absolutists and criminal rulers made by, amongst others, the American state and the British state (and the French state, and the German state, and the Italian state, and...), it should not come as a surprise that deep rage called Muslim fundamentalism has been brought to life.

Since 1989 USA government military sales to Saudi Arabia have topped \$40.6 billion; in 1988 and 1989, four British arms deals transferred \$28 million of military equipment to Saddam Hussein's regime. Even biological agents, including Anthrax, have been shipped to Iraq by USA companies under government licence [July 2002, *Amnesty International Magazine*]. To think or make us believe that no evil might come out of these transactions of death is typical of state logic and it fits appropriately with its agenda. The logic underlying the agenda is impeccable: the fire is engineered and started, directly or indirectly, by somebody in the fire brigade in order for the fire brigade as a whole (i.e. the state) to appear afterwards presenting

itself as the indispensable firefighter. Glory, power and stable employment are deemed likely to follow from this dynamic.

Before examining the state agenda, let us focus on this aspect of setting fire to something, that is on the cultivation of violence for political aims.

### **Violence (terrifying violence)**

The use of violence (terrifying violence) is a basic tool in the armoury of any individual, group, organization aspiring to power (conquering, plundering, etc.) or already in power.

History is full of individuals who resorted to terror in order to conquer and subjugate: from Hannibal with his terrifying elephants used in battle against the Romans, to Attila with his terrifying acts of destruction, to the Pirates in the Mediterranean sea, attacking villages on the coast and forcing the inhabitants to flee in terror towards the interior.

The conventional historical image is that, for the common human being, life in the past was a dangerous affair, subject to continuous risks of violent death and gratuitous destruction. This, as the argument goes, was until the arrival of the (modern) state and the introduction/imposition of law and order.

The true story is a bit different, especially as far as the arrival of the state is concerned. In fact, the very coming into pre-eminence of state power as a result of the French Revolution (1789-1795) is marked by the existence and spread of incredible violence to which historians refer as The Terror.

The Reign of Terror (September 1793 - July 1794) was characterized by arrests of suspects (at least 300,000), summary trials and a wave of executions (17,000 according to the official figure), with many ordinary citizens dying in prison without being heard in court. Terror was the weapon in the hand of a new state to consolidate its power.

The Reign of Terror succeeded in ushering in the new French state, the one that, with Napoleon, with the forced conscription, the civil code, the police and the bureaucracy, would dominate conti-

nental Europe at the beginning of the 19th century and offer or impose on other countries the example and the model of state organization.

The French Revolution had been preceded by another less conspicuous manifestation of the use of harsh methods to frighten individuals. The American Revolution had been characterized by a certain behaviour against administrators, troops and goods linked to the English Crown, that could be qualified as acts of terrorism (e.g. looting, arson, assaults, ambushes, etc.) performed to induce a radical change in the English colonial government, up to its collapse.

As a matter of fact, many actions committed during the American and French Revolutions by both sides could fall within a contemporary definition of terrorism as "the calculated use or threat of violence to inculcate fear, intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies" [2002, Charles Townshend, Chapter I].

Terrorism is then any act of violence that targets unarmed or unaware individuals thought to be part of the enemy camp or directed even against those unwilling to take sides in the conflict. The aim is not to make prisoners or to win a small battle but to frighten the opposition as a whole up to the point that many individuals in their ranks are so psychologically shaken that they are willing to accede to the requests of the other side or even to give up the fight and surrender.

In this respect, the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima (80,000 dead) and Nagasaki (40,000 dead) with the aim of frightening the Japanese government and the whole of Japanese society and lead to a total surrender can be seen as the clearest and loudest example of a terrorist act.

In general wars are mainly aimed at defeating the enemy state through indiscriminate attacks involving also the civilian population. The Second World War, with the killing of 55 million individuals of which half were non-combatants and with episodes like the massive bombing of Coventry (England) and Dresden (Germany) not to mention the deportations and massacres of civilians, can be seen as a

continuous sequence of terrorist acts instigated and committed under the auspices of the states.

Terrorism as terrifying intolerance and terrifying violence has then a precise function to perform.

### **The function of terrorism**

Terrorism has been and is generally employed for two main purposes:

- To seek state power (new rulers)

Many nations count, amongst their heroes, individuals that have committed or have been involved in acts of terrorism. For instance, Italian schoolbooks celebrate an adventurer (Giuseppe Garibaldi) who invaded another country (the Southern Kingdom) or extol the bravery of those who committed violence against the government of the day (for instance in Lombardy in 1848).

Similar acts are generally committed in order to force a surrender of those who are perceived as enemies/occupiers and to install a new power. The notion that the new power is, sometimes, a less oppressive and a more sympathetic one is a very important point that induces many to accept and justify those acts of violence. However, they remain acts of violence committed to scare and subdue the adversary. Somebody could even put forward the thesis that they are unnecessary acts of violence and that a fight for independence could be conducted, in some cases, using non-violent methods, as shown by Gandhi in India.

Besides that, some new governments, installed after acts of violent rebellion, have not always been better governments. As history shows, fascism and national socialism came to power after having instilled in the minds of people the fear of a communist plot that would crush their freedom and expropriate their properties; to substantiate this fear they encouraged or exploited violent acts, like the planting of a bomb at the Diana movie-house in Milan (1921) or the fire at the Reichstag in Berlin (1933), putting the blame totally on anarchists and communists.

Their tactic worked and it has represented a dire example that brute might could be the way for accessing and becoming state right.

The fight of the Haganah against the Arabs and the British in Palestine with a view to the establishment of the Jews Homeland represents one of the best and most successful examples of 20th century terrorist violence aimed at installing a new power. The tactic employed was to wear down the morale of the British troops that were acting as a police force of interposition between Jews and Arabs, in order to force them to leave. The way to achieve this result was to conduct terrorist acts of which the most resounding were the assassination of Lord Moyne (1944) Britain's Resident Minister in the Middle East and the blowing up of the King David Hotel (1946), the British headquarters, that killed 91 persons, mostly civilians. Both represented strong signals for the withdrawal of the British military forces and decisive steps towards the proclamation of the new state of Israel.

Other groups, in other parts of the world have used terrorism to unsettle current state rulers and install themselves or sympathetic people in power. The military and the secret service are masters in this kind of operations. A classic example was the rise to power of general Suharto in Indonesia amid the massacre of more than half a million members and sympathizers of the communist party (1965-1966) accused of plotting against the state.

In Europe during the sixties and seventies the so-called left or right terrorists had the proclaimed aim of subverting and replacing state governments, but behind their words and acts there was nothing very much in terms of ideas and moral aspirations. In fact, many of those acts were inspired and then used by the established state rulers as pretexts to reinforce their power. This leads us to the second aspect related to the function of terrorism.

- To strengthen state power (old rulers)

Terrorism, similarly to war, works wonders in terms of providing justifications for the widening and strengthening of the power of the state.

If we examine many episodes in the bloody history of terrorism,



in too many cases we discover, hidden behind a curtain of lies and covers-up, the hand of the state in the form of the secret police.

This has been true, for instance, with regard to the anarchists. Their actions, when violent, have been addressed against specific individuals belonging to the top ruling élite (kings, prime ministers), sometimes as a reaction for having ordered or supported particularly harsh repressions (e.g. as when the King of Italy Umberto I was killed for having congratulated the general Bava Beccaris who had ordered his men to fire on demonstrators in Milan, 1898).

So, when bombs have been put in public places, killing indiscriminately, the idea that true anarchists were behind the deed is something that does not fit within the general conception of anarchism (even if the individuals responsible professed to be anarchists). Nevertheless, it was made believable through a massive manipulation of facts by the state (aided and abetted by the national journals) and the desire of the people to find quickly a guilty person (real or invented).

The practice of police infiltration amongst anarchists was so common, that Joseph Conrad could not help writing a short story (*The Secret Agent*, 1907) and Ignazio Silone expressed on the theme some vitriolic considerations when he wrote:

"The art of conspiracies and terrorist acts is rather delicate and cannot be left to chance. The best successful conspiracies and terrorist acts are naturally those devised by the police." (Ignazio Silone, *The School of Dictators*, 1938)

Throughout history anarchists, communists, fascists, jews, gypsies, palestinians and many others have been used as scapegoats by the state power to strengthen state power.

Under Stalin, the Moscow trials following the assassination of Kirov were mounted and justified for combating what were described as external and internal plots against communism. They were all pure invention to reinforce the élite in power and Stalin above all.

So, all the cases and acts of terrifying intolerance and terrifying

violence, by whoever committed, have generally succeeded in giving a new breath of life to state power and to the implementation of the state agenda.

### **The state agenda**

There are many episodes in history that can testify to the instrumental use of intolerance and violence as the basis of state power and as the recurrent means to reinforce state power.

Intolerance and violence have been repeatedly used by the state rulers to implement the state agenda consisting essentially in perpetuating itself. This has resulted in never ending fights against:

- Autonomous minorities

Since the time when the makers of the French Revolution proclaimed « *La République une et indivisible* », the state central power has fought so called "minorities" on every possible front: political, economic, cultural.

Historical examples have been : the confinement in specific areas and the silent decimation of the Native Americans in the USA, the extermination of the Armenians in Turkey, the repression of the Ukrainians and of the people in other autonomous republics in the Soviet Union, and so on and so forth. It is highly unlikely that a strong central state has not been responsible for some type of repression against one or several minorities. In recent times we have witnessed the ethnic cleansing in ex-Yugoslavia, the repression in Chechnya with the indiscriminate killing of men as potential rebels, the use of gas against the Kurds in Iraq, and many other appalling interventions by central states.

- Alien groups

To protect the security of the state, alien or opposition groups, or just groups that are perceived as alien or could represent a potential opposition or a nuisance, have been infiltrated or cordoned off.

As already stated, anarchists (or, in some cases, pretended anarchists) have been the most infiltrated group in the past because from them came the most vociferous proclamations against the state.

However, for the state, everybody could become an enemy if he belongs to an alien group. In the USA after Pearl Harbour every person of Japanese origin was taken and put in a camp even if he had not committed any crime, only for being anthropologically linked to the current enemy. After the destruction of the World Trade Centre, every Arab is seen with suspicion (to say the least) by the USA state and there are Arabs detained without any formal accusation who are likely to stay in prison for as long as it suits the American Government. Once again similarities emerge between state and mafia codes of behaviour; in both cases all the relatives and associates of the enemy are considered enemy, even if they are totally extraneous to the conflict.

- Heretical individuals

Individuals opposing the policy of the state have been put into prison (e.g. Mandela), killed while abroad or in exile (e.g. Trotsky), captured by the secret service and brought back to face capital punishment or life imprisonment (e.g. Ocalan), forbidden entrance or exit from the state (e.g. Linus Pauling, Charlie Chaplin).

Moreover, individuals in all opposition groups have been put under mild or close surveillance, profiles have been made of them, their conversations have been tapped, their life scrutinized (from Martin Luther King in the USA to Colouche in France).

Within this situation of intolerance and violence, the states who have the monopoly of what and whom to consider intolerant and violent, are from time to time confronted by other entities (emerging groups, aggressive individuals) that intend to obtain for themselves the same prerogatives, in other words, to enjoy a similar monopolistic power. This is, put simply, the terrorism - anti-terrorism dynamic, with the terrorist label applied by those in power to those who seek to displace them forcibly. If the latter succeed, they are likely to apply the same vocabulary to those who in future will, in their turn, oppose them, in order to replace them, in a never-ending cycle of intolerance and violence.

## The state methods

To implement this agenda of manipulation and repression against groups and individuals, the state has regularly made recourse to all sorts of acts of intolerance (smear campaigns) and violence (use of the secret service for terrorist activities).

- Manipulation. The methods used are the classic ones of propaganda based on:

- polarization

The variety of positions and the subtleties of differentiations are erased in order for a polarity to be the only available option: us and them (currently USA vs. them).

- self-extolment

Some national media start repeating daily that every good aspect is associated with a certain side (us) which is portrayed as the standard bearer and the bulwark of civilization and from which every good derives.

- demonization

As a corollary to self-extolment and in order to stress further the message, the other side (them) is charged with every possible abomination and qualified with terrible epithets or expressions (for instance the "Great Satan" or the "Axis of Evil").

- derision.

The state and its appendages, having accomplished their propaganda mission, verify if the message has been internalized by as many people as possible. This is the point when the "with us or against us" imperative is put to work. If it emerges that some heretic (*hairetikos* = able to choose) has realized that the two positions are so similar with respect to intolerance and violence that they do not represent a real alternative and refuses to play the game, he/she must be derided as a weak, confused, hopeless, unreliable individual.

To give an example of how much the propaganda machine is so emotionally charged and so void of any hint of rationality consider some phrases like "Allah is with us" or "God bless America." They could be taken as two ways of expressing the same concept, but one is

felt as menacing and the other as welcoming. Which is menacing and which is welcoming depends on the brand of state ideology the person has been brought up with (i.e. manipulated). This is exactly the case when the same convictions are defined as positive beliefs or crazy ideas according to who holds them.

- Repression. The repression is conducted through a three-level process:

- detection

We are not referring here to the simple investigation of criminal activities but to what is called spying on people, to make sure that no one steps too much out of the line of permitted thinking and acting. It results in tapping conversation, accessing electronic messages, requesting databases of members of associations, clubs, libraries, etc., all in the name of security. The problem is that the security of the state (or of whatever other domineering organization like the party or the sect) very often collides with the security of the individuals.

- detention

When there are even small suspicions that some people could be a threat to national security (i.e. the security of the state) they are detained for as long as the state considers it appropriate. The anti-terrorism fever can be so high that people may be arrested, kept in prison for days or weeks and then released because nothing has emerged to substantiate the accusations. These are the lucky ones; others are kept in prison for ages, in total violation not only of every moral norm but also of every legal code.

- destruction

The final stage of repression is the physical destruction of human beings and of the natural/built environment. Napalm bombs, cluster bombs, missiles, machine gun killing at check-points, torturing and then throwing the bodies into the sea, raping women, cutting the throats of villagers, razing houses and bombing hospitals: these have all been episodes of terrifying intolerance and violence qualified either as terrorism or anti-terrorism according to who has more power and arrogates to himself the right to assign the label. In actual fact the acts of destruction, by whoever committed, are so similar as

to be indistinguishable other than for the magnitude of the devastation.

TO GIVE JUST two examples of the non-existence of a real divide between terrorism and anti-terrorism, it is very likely (see *Le Monde* 26/7/2002) that the Russian state FSB (ex KGB) was involved in the planting of bombs in Moscow and in the subsequent ascription of responsibility to Chechnian separatists. Again, it is almost certain that the French Secret Service was behind the sinking of the Greenpeace vessel *The Rainbow Warrior* that represented an obstacle to the French state tests of the atomic bomb (1995).

It is then very important to be conscious of both the state agenda and the state methods because it is possible that some ways of thinking and behaving are absorbed by those who presume and present themselves as being in opposition to those very attitudes and postures. In fact, it is in human nature that those who have been victims, given the opportunity, are likely to replicate the same intolerant and violent behaviour and to become torturers.

### **From terrorized to terrorizers**

It is a recurrent pattern in history that groups of people who had been exploited, enslaved or even partly exterminated, become, often, in their turn exploiters, enslavers or agents of terrible acts of repression once they succeed in getting out of their terrible plight.

The French Revolution, as usual, provides a good starting point for evidence supporting the case. A revolutionary movement purporting to act for the development of freedom, equality and brotherhood became, within a short period of time, a highly centralized and highly aggressive state, whose army roamed throughout Europe, subjecting and sometimes annexing one country after the other, all in the name of liberty.

The same dynamic took place in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. The new centralized state became a criminal butcher

(millions of common people exterminated) and, in the course of time, an imperialistic super-power, spreading its tentacles out to neighbouring countries, all in the name of social equality.

More recently North Vietnam underwent the same transformation, from attacked victim to imperialistic regional power, while people were fleeing on boats looking for the freedom they could not find in the new authoritarian state.

However, the most shocking case is represented by the Jews. A cosmopolitan group, made of bright and hardworking individuals who contributed to a very high degree to the advancement of world knowledge, the Jews have been the individuals whose sufferings have been probably the longest and deepest ever endured by any community of human beings in history.

Their stateless situation made them the convenient target of state power in a world divided amongst territorial nation states; no wonder that after such a terrible experience, their first aspiration and objective was the establishment of their own state.

The result has been that the new state, as following an inexorable law of monopolistic power, has behaved and is behaving atrociously against another stateless people, practically confining them in ghettos, their movement rigidly controlled and restricted by the state police and army.

To understand the distance and difference existing between the cosmopolitan Jews and the state of Israel it suffices to remark that Israeli troops wrote identification numbers on the forearms of Palestinian detainees awaiting interrogation in the West Bank. Some survivors of the Holocaust were horrified by it, realizing that the former persecuted had begot new persecutors who were starting to use the same heinous practices as their former torturers. This can be seen as a consequence of establishing a state with all its (congenital) ideological and material armoury of intolerance and violence.

In many cases, these transformations have gone unnoticed or have been swiftly discounted. As a matter of fact, it is very hard for people who devoted their energies and passion to the fight for freedom and equality, to accept that the result of their fight is a new

state of oppression for somebody else. And so, they close their eyes in front of reality. When this voluntary blindness is denounced and the violence exposed, the specious argument is put forward that it is necessary or preferable to keep silent and stop criticizing otherwise ammunition is given to the enemies of freedom and equality.

For this reason a communist had to gloss over the crimes of Stalin in order to avoid the sin of anti-communism; a supporter of the Jews cause should accept whatever is done by the Israeli government in order to avoid a presumed anti-Semitism; and everyone should bow unconditionally to the old saying "my country right or wrong" in order to avoid being unpatriotic.

Clearly all this is unacceptable, good only for infantile people who do not see the distance between ideal and reality (as if Stalin had been the expression of some sentiment of equality and anti-exploitation contained in the idea of communism) or between the past and the present (as if the state of Israel were the expression of the cosmopolitanism and moral standing of the original Jews).

As for the state, almost everywhere it is using the same old trick: in order not to compromise the war against terrorism, individuals should accept all the limitations imposed by the state on their personal freedom and personal rights and they should not criticize the states who are (supposedly) fighting terrorism to protect the free world.

If we could spend just a moment examining the evidence of how much support the new terrorists (Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden) have received from those who present themselves as the anti-terrorism fighters (mainly the Western states) we should dismiss all this talk not just as propaganda but as a colossal hoax, set up only to find a justification for the continuous existence of the state.

And this is the essence of the problem and the core of the argument put forward here.



## **The war to promote war**

At the beginning of the 20th century Randolph Bourne stated that "war is the health of the state" because it promotes the centralization of power, demands prompt obedience and requires the surrender of freedom and of critical independent thinking. All these are essential conditions for the strengthening of state power.

However, in the course of the 20th century something new has happened: the discovery of the atomic bomb and of its enormous destructive power. From that moment onwards another world war, with the use of this new weapon, was hard to contemplate. For this reason, military confrontation, so ingrained in the genetic nature of the state, was limited to global cold war and local conflicts (e.g. Korea, Vietnam).

With the disappearance of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war, armed conflicts took place only in relatively small countries as a result of the nationalistic and racist attitudes of local bullies and warlords. The big states have intervened in these local wars through international organization such as the United Nations and NATO.

If this situation had been left to continue, the irrelevance of the nation states would have deepened even further. Whatever the state rulers might say in favour of international organizations, this is not an acceptable scenario for the nation states (especially the larger ones). Their rulers have certainly realized that they have to reinvent and reaffirm their role and function if they want to survive in the new century.

Nothing could better suit the nation states after the discovery of the atomic bomb and the end of the cold war than the role of super cops against terrorism.

The fight against terrorism provides the various requisites that were once granted by the war: it promotes the centralization of power, it demands prompt obedience and it requires the surrender of freedom and of critical independent thinking.

Moreover, it provides a boost to state occupation. The new USA Department of Homeland Security is forecasted to give employment

to 75,000 people. These individuals and their families will certainly be in the forefront of any struggle for safeguarding or even extending the power of the state.

There is even a further point in favour of the choice of terrorism as the new form of war. This war, like the previous ones in the past, is bound to promote further wars. But, while a full-scale conflict cannot last forever and is likely to introduce a certain fatigue and, finally, a revulsion of fighting and a longing for peace, the war on terrorism could be a truly never-ending war. In fact, it is potentially always present everywhere but, at the same time, in reality, is circumscribed to a specific although shifting territory.

In order to combat terrorism, the state is likely to make recourse, more than ever, to the same methods of intolerance and violence that are meant to be eradicated ; in other words, to use terror to fight terrorism. This will have the likely result of promoting even more intolerance and violence in a continuous self-feeding spiral.

For this reason the war against terrorism is actually a war to promote war or, in other words, a war to promote the permanence of the state, its role and function, in the years and decades to come.

If this happens the state will have achieved its goal, that is to use terrorism as the new longevity cure against its progressive senescence and decadence.

And yet, something new is happening.

In the past the power and authority of the state were so strong and so strongly internalized by the people that even blatant acts of aggression and repression were not seen as manifestations of intolerance and violence. Realpolitik prevailed and might was justified as right when originating from the state.

In recent times, with the re-emergence of globalism, new feelings and outlooks have appeared. The state, its authority and power declining, has seen its acts been put not only under scrutiny but also under attack. Political butchers have been brought to trial (Slobodan Milosevic), some other have narrowly escaped trial (Augusto Pinochet), others have been in hiding (Radovan Karadic and Vlan Mladic) and some heads of state are worried that the International

Court could indict them for crimes against humanity and so are totally opposed to the very idea of such a Tribunal (e.g. the USA government).

Injustice, or what is perceived as injustice, cannot any longer be committed by the state rulers without too many persons in the entire world being witnesses and without arousing sentiments of disgust and revulsion in many of the spectators.

This disgust and revulsion need to be made active and put to good use and the best aim is to operate, in many ways and in many places, for the peace that promotes peace.

### **The peace to promote peace**

To establish and reinforce state power a considerable amount of intolerance (fundamentalism) and violence (terrorism) is a necessary pre-condition.

Some could object to the use of terms like fundamentalism and terrorism as qualifying the policy of the state. In actual fact, what is defined as fundamentalism is, under state terminology, the fostering of a national culture for promoting a national identity. Needless to say, this has been accompanied, in too many instances, by the repression of an "alien" culture and the prohibition of a foreign/local tongue. In this sense we think it is appropriate to talk of fundamentalism with reference to the state national culture.

As for terrorism, the state justifies its own violent actions in the name of the preservation of order and the granting of security to all citizens against criminals and troublemakers intent on disrupting state law and order and weakening state authority. However, the use of immoral practices and abominable methods, in some cases even acknowledged and theorized in training manuals of the army and the police, makes the state behaviour indistinguishable from what is defined as terrorism.

In a relatively recent reference textbook, the belief has been openly expressed that "State terror has been vastly more lethal than factional terror and has often been an antecedent to, and a contribu-

tory cause of, factional terrorism" (1988, *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*).

And this is what Sigmund Freud had to say about the behaviour of the state at the start of the First World War:

"The individual citizen can with horror convince himself in this war of what would occasionally cross his mind in peace-time - that the state has forbidden to the individual the practice of wrong-doing, not because it desires to abolish it, but because it wants to monopolize it, like salt and tobacco." (Sigmund Freud, *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*, 1915)

If this is the case, i.e. if the state is a war agent that promotes wars, it follows logically that the continuous reduction of state intolerance and state violence (until the final withering away of the state) is the indispensable pre-condition for furthering the peace that promotes peace.

Historical reality teaches us that where there is no national state and no national mono-culture but many tongues and traditions coexist and compete (as in the case of Switzerland) or when the state has minimal power of interference in the lives of the people and laughable power of repression (as in the case of Monte Carlo), fundamentalism and terrorism are not an issue because they are practically non-existent.

This seems to give additional substance to the hypothesis that both the phenomenon of fundamentalism and terrorism are inextricably linked to the existence of the state or to the fight for the establishment of a state.

Fundamentalism and terrorism are, for any actual or potential state power, like two miraculous crutches that can resuscitate a state élite in disarray, pump up the popularity of a leader in decline, propel on the scene a new political élite bound to rule for years to come. In any case, the final result is the same: an increase in state power.

To get out of this vicious logic based on the triad state-fundamentalism-terrorism, each aspect feeding and reinforcing the other, we

have to make clear that the only way towards peace is to promote peace.

Peace is not only the absence of war and violence. It is a more complex dynamic based on autonomy (self-reliance), equity (fair justice) and care (active love).

The measures to be taken for a peace dynamic that promotes peace, all refer to the displacement of state actions and policies, in a process leading, eventually, to the removal of the state itself. To attempt a short list, what needs to be done immediately is:

- to focus everybody's attention on the sale of arms promoted, managed and authorized by some states to other states. The secrecy surrounding this dirty trafficking should be lifted and the states should be exposed for what they are: war machines, manufacturing and employing weapons of mass destruction. The final objective should be to put an end to the arms trade altogether.

- to publicize widely whenever a so-called civilized state or super-state offers its backing to repressive regimes (for instance, with stationed military personnel ready to intervene to prop up the ruling élite). The final objective should be to grant unquestionably to any human being and community the freedom to secede or leave or suspend support for any state.

- to overcome the opposition to the institution and operation of a World Tribunal for crimes against humanity to which individuals and organizations should be bound. The final objective should be to monitor, assess and pronounce judgment on any violation of human rights by whoever committed (presidents and prime ministers included).

It is clear that these measures are not at all to the liking of the states, especially of those powerful states that pretend to be in the forefront in the fight against terrorism. In fact, as already pointed out, their fight is a means to promote further fundamentalism and terrorism and so, to promote themselves as the only legitimate point of reference for the provision of security. A total, cynical and cruel deception.

Security is not something we can pursue in exchange for freedom, because, as remarked by Benjamin Franklin:

"They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."

Peace is not something we can expect as a gracious gift from the murderous hands of warmongering states. It is a personal and communitarian effort to live a decent human life without exploiting and without being exploited. This is the only way to go beyond fundamentalism and terrorism. It is not a naive proposal for the solution of a difficult problem; it is the only sensible solution.

During the 1960's a terrible fight erupted in a village in Southern Italy between two families. It was named "the *faida* (feud) of Seminara." A member of a family was murdered and, in revenge, a member of the other family responsible of the murder was killed. In its turn, the new killing caused another revenge murder and so on. Sixteen members of both families died senselessly and twenty-six were wounded in order to preserve the family honour (or so it was said). Until a person rebelled against this insanity and said: enough is enough. The person was vilified, branded a coward, ostracized by his own family, but the killing stopped.

We must have the same courage and lucidity to oppose fundamentalism and terrorism, in other words to oppose statism and its manipulative discourses and appalling practices.

We will be vilified, called names, proclaimed cowardly, naive, insane. It does not matter.

There is an entire world of peace to be earned.

### **Postscript (February 2023)**

In recent times terrorism is on the wane. It has not provided that permanent and sufficient menace that was necessary for the state rulers to consolidate their power, to expand security measures and to restart the industries of armaments. Terrorism was something too

flimsy, erratic, and substantially weak. A new-old enemy, much more powerful, had to be discovered and invented. This has happened courtesy of a comic actor (master Wolodymyr Zelensky) and a well-known bully (master Wladimir Putin). They are the two protagonists of an ever-familiar script, a family feud. In fact, there is nothing better for performing the function of a securitarian menace because, as a Mafia *faida*, it could last for years, especially with some helping and propping from the exterior (weapons, mercenaries, propaganda).

In this case the matter of the feud is the Mafia control of the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk. Nothing seems to have change from the time when the French and the German states were engaged in a bloody war for the control of the Alsace and Lorraine territory and people.

Numerous are the functions of this *faida*. The most relevant seem to be the following ones:

- To revive the fortune of the USA and UK powers now on a decline (they are the more involved in providing military aid and spreading disinformation).
- To weaken Russia and, especially, to use the Russian state as the new resurrected convenient enemy, the always necessary villain, as during the “glorious” infamous time of the cold war.
- To send the message that any change concerning state territorial borders is not permitted, unless approved by the super-power that still considers itself to be the master of the world, namely the USA, supported by its docile servants (the NATO members).

The macro-feudal states that are still the current form of socio-political organization have fought and will fight any attempt at secession from a central power (e.g., Chechnya, Catalonia, Scotland) seen as menace to their survival and so to be repressed with all available means (army, police, tribunals, propaganda, etc.). In fact, if the people of one region start by offering a possible successful example of

autonomous administration, the domino effect might be devastating for all central states.

However, if the current political scenario remains, the future of the XXI century might be characterized by a protracted series of civil strives, if not civil wars, like the so-called religious wars of the past.



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## CHURCHISM / STATISM

### Presentation

The beginnings of Churchism

The rise of Churchism

The predominance of Churchism

The beginnings of Statism

The rise of Statism

The predominance of Statism

The pillars and poisons of Churchism

The pillars and poisons of Statism

Beyond Churchism and Statism

References



### Presentation

**T**he word *religion* comes from the Latin *re-ligo* and means “binding together.” This term designated, for instance, the communities of monks and cloistered nuns that congre-

gated during the Middle Ages in religious orders (i.e. *religions*) and established convents all over Europe.

The binding, as connecting-uniting, can take place at two different levels:

- transcendent : human being - God
- immanent: human being – another human being.

With respect to the type of binding and the entities involved, we come to distinguish between:

- a spiritual religion that manifests itself as faith in a transcendent entity (God).
- a secular religion that manifests itself as a creed in an immanent entity (e.g. humankind, nation, state).

Both these types and forms of binding together, the spiritual and the secular, have given rise, in the course of history, to institutions of which the most relevant, and the current ones, are:

- the Church. The term *church* (Anglo-Saxon, *cirice*, *circe*; Modern German, *Kirche*; Swedish, *Kyrka*) is the name employed in the Teutonic languages to render the Greek *ekklesia* (*ecclesia*) (Catholic Encyclopedia, *The Church*).

- the State. The term *state* and its cognates in other European languages (*stato* in Italian, *Estado* in Spanish, *état* in French, *Staat* in German) derives from the Latin *status*, meaning “condition” or “status” (rank). The term is also connected to the word “estate” referring to a condition of worldly fortune (e.g. landed property).

The aim and function of these entities have been the organization of the binding, i.e. the promotion and implementation of the idea of uniting and administering those who, based on chance, personal choice, or external imposition, found themselves bound together by a variety of outcomes (e.g. birth, propinquity, tradition, interests, etc.).

Given the commonality of the practical aim, even if by way of different conceptions and finalities (spiritual, secular), the similarities between the two organizations have been remarkable.

This was due also to the fact that all human beings share certain common traits. For this reason, all those who rule a dominant institution present strong affinities, in attitude and behaviour.

At the same time, when large organizations pursue the same objective of binding people together and administering them, the contrasts, and even clashes, between them are inevitable and recurrent. They appear, also, in the form of rival conceptions that tend to justify the supremacy of one power over the other.

Those conceptions and the behaviour of the entities that elaborated and expressed them, are here examined, namely:

- Churchism : the concept of the overall supremacy of the Church.
- Statism : the concept of the overall supremacy of the State.

The following brief historical survey and synthetic analysis of these realities aim at showing that:

- to side with one or the other concept and entity does not free the human being from a domineering power.

- to free the human being from a domineering power has been and is possible only with a radical change concerning the concepts affecting these entities and their related practices.

### **The beginnings of Churchism**

In the distant past, at the time of the Greek city-states and of ancient Rome, there was no separation between transcendent and immanent religion.

As highlighted by Fustel de Colanges with reference to the ancient city:

“La cité avait été fondée sur une religion et constituée comme une Église.” “La religion qui avait enfanté l’État, et l’État qui entretenait la religion, se soutenaient l’un l’autre et ne faisaient qu’un ; ces deux puissances associées et confondues formaient une puissance presque surhumaine à laquelle l’âme et le corps étaient également asservis.” [“The city was based on a religion and constituted like a Church.” “Religion that gave birth to the State, and the State that

assisted religion, supported each other and were just one thing; these two powers associated and confounded made up an almost super-human power to which the soul and the body were equally subjected.”] (*La cité antique*, book III, chapter XVIII, 1864)

During the time of imperial Rome, the populations of the Empire were bound together, not just by the authority of Rome, but also by the granting of Roman citizenship through a process known as Romanization. It represented one of the most successful tools of integration of the different cultural groups under the control of Rome.

As for the aspect of transcendent religion, the Romans generally allowed the practice of many different cults if they were not in opposition to imperial power or a nuisance to public order and morality (like, for instance, the Bacchanals that the Senate tried to restrain in 186 B.C.).

The preservation of cults and deities of the annexed populations, instead of their suppression, was meant to promote stability and defuse social unrest. As a matter of fact, the political power, at Rome and in the provinces, inspired and promoted many of these cults. They had, as predominant features, the fact of being:

- Polytheistic, i.e. relying on many Gods, each one performing a specific function and supervising a specific sector or activity.
- Ritualistic, i.e. based on highly formal ceremonies (sacrifices, offerings, processions, methods of divination).
- Opportunistic, i.e. utilitarian in the sense that the rites were aimed at achieving specific goals or fulfilling specific vows.

The appearance of a new life concept, inspired by the figure and message of Jesus Christ and diffused by his disciples and followers, especially Paul of Tarsus, represented a radical break with all the preceding transcendent and immanent experiences.

The differentiating features of Christianity were the fact of being:

- Monotheistic : “*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*” (Exodus, 20:3). “*One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and*

*Father of us all who is above all and through all and in all."*

(Letter of Paul to the Ephesians, 4:5-6).

- Spiritualistic : "*My kingdom is not of this world.*" (John, 18:36).
- Universalistic : "*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Letter of Paul to the Galatians, 3:28).

These refreshing novelties found a fertile terrain at a time when the empire was undergoing a terminal decline. According to Edward Gibbon (*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1776 – Chapter XV), the main reasons for the power of attraction and the widespread development of the Christian faith were:

- the "practice of rigid virtue".
- the zeal of proselytism : "there is the strongest reason to believe that before the reign of Diocletian and Constantine the faith of Christ had been preached in every province and in all the great cities of the empire".
- the setting up of a network of local churches with "provincial councils, which mutually communicated and approved their respective proceedings" so that "the catholic church soon assumed the form, and acquired the strength, of a great federative republic."

The term "catholic" derives from the Greek "katolikos" meaning *universal*. It was first used in the early second century and marks the aspect of gathering and binding people in a communitarian assembly (*ecclesia*), beyond any difference of culture, race, status.

However, while the message was addressed to everybody, the fact that Christians lived in a sort of parallel society, with their own moral norms and burial places, together with the refusal to participate in official cults and to recognize the emperor as a God-like figure to venerate, provided, for some rulers and common people, sufficient reason to attack and persecute this religious minority. Clear evidence of that is the fact that the first thirty Pontiffs in Rome were all martyred.

The initial persecutions (under Nero, Domitian, Trajan), were

local and limited. They were followed, from the third century, by wider and more systematic repressions under Decius (edict in 250), Valerian (measures taken in 257 and 258) and especially Diocletian that, in 303, started a general persecution against Christians.

In the words of Tertullian (c.160 - c. 220)

“they [those who conspire in hatred] take the Christians to be the cause of all calamity, of all mischief in the world. If the Tiber overflows, if the Nile does not fertilize the fields, if the sky stops, if the earth quakes, if famine or pestilence take their marches through the country, the cry is at once, ‘The Christians to the Lions’.” (*Apology for the Christians*, Chapter XL)

Nevertheless, all this did not stop the spreading of Christianity that attracted not only the poor and destitute but also individuals belonging to the high echelons of Roman society.

It was also in response to the fact that persecutions did not halt the appeal of Christianity and the rise of its Catholic Church, that the son of Diocletian, Constantine, on assuming imperial power in 306, stopped all repressive actions and allowed Christians to freely profess their faith.

In 313, Constantine (who controlled the Western part of the Roman Empire) and Licinius (who controlled the Balkans) met in Milan and agreed to treat Christians with benevolence and to extend this benevolence to all religious communities. (“We, Constantinus and Licinius, the Emperors, having met in concord at Milan ... should therefore give both to Christians and to all other free facility to follow the religion which each may desire ...” (Edict of Milan, 313, from Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum - On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, in Sidney Z. Ehler and John B. Morrall, eds., 1954)

Constantine had been exposed to Christianity by his mother Helena, and, on his deathbed, assented to be baptised. It seems that he considered his military successes as related to his acceptance of Christianity and so he favoured the development and the prosperity of the Church. He became also interested in the solution of the



controversies that arose within the Church and to this aim he convened the Council of Nicea (325) where some questions were settled and some decisions concerning the organization of the clergy and the date for the celebration of Easter were taken.

During the time of Constantine, the favour that the heathens had enjoyed in the past from the rulers (for instance resources for the maintenance of the temples) disappeared. Meanwhile "Constantine granted the Church one privilege after another. As early as 313 the Church obtained immunity for its ecclesiastics, including freedom from taxation and compulsory service, and from obligatory state offices - such for example as the curial dignity, which was a heavy burden. The Church further obtained the right to inherit property, and Constantine moreover placed Sunday under the protection of the State." (Catholic Encyclopedia, *Constantine the Great*)

And so, the terrain was prepared for the emperor Theodosius I to declare, in the year 380, that there was only one faith and that only the assemblies of the Catholic Christians should receive the name of Church. All the others "are to be punished not only by Divine retribution but also by our own measures, which we have decided in accordance with Divine inspiration." (*Edict of Thessalonica*, 380, in Sidney Z. Ehler and John B. Morrall, eds., 1954).

### **The rise of Churchism**

The ascension of the Catholic Church to a position of supremacy with respect to other religious expressions meant that, for various centuries (i.e. from the Edict of Thessalonica, 380, to the affirmation of religious tolerance starting from the XVII century) this new transcendent religion, like the previous ones, found herself intermingled with secular power. These two entities, namely the Church and the Empire, alternatively supporting or opposing each other, remained for a very long period the main institutional actors on the historical scene.

Spiritual religion and the Catholic Church played a very impor-

tant role in history, even if always dependent for protection on a secular power.

After the death of Theodosius (395), the Empire was divided between his two sons, Arcadius in the east (Constantinople) and Honorius in the west (Rome). This partition was to result, in the course of time, in a different development of the relationship between Church and State in the two areas. Briefly said we have:

- In the East, the setting up of a *State Church* (Hans, Küng, 1999) in which the Emperor acted not just as protector of the *ecclesia* but also as supervisor of the right doctrine (orthodoxy) and elector of ecclesiastical personnel, in particular the patriarch of Constantinople, who was appointed or, at least, confirmed by him.

- In the West, the development of a *Christian State* (Hans, Küng, 1999) in which the Pope became increasingly detached from the imperial power and from the patriarch of Constantinople, and was in search of a new secular entity on which to confer the power to protect Christianity and upon which to exert its moral authority.

These separate paths would culminate in the year 1054 with the mutual excommunication of Rome and Constantinople because of theological differences and reciprocal pretensions of supremacy.

But, prior to that, in the West, the Emperors and the administrative and military apparatus had shown their absolute ineffectiveness when faced with attacks by warriors from Central and North Europe. These populations were occasionally federated to the Empire, but more often were discontented with their lot and in search of new riches.

A series of invasions took place in Italy, Gaul, and Spain, that resulted also in the sack of Rome by the Visigoths under Alaric (410) and by the Vandals under Genseric (455). Eventually, in 476, the last western Emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed by Odoacer, a German soldier and military leader, who became king of Italy (476-493).

Out of all these upheavals, the Roman Pope emerged as the defender of peace and, with his spiritual message, also as the comforter of ills. In fact, to Pope Leo I (440-461) is attributed the

merit of persuading Attila, the Hun, to turn back from his invasion of Italy (452). Whatever the truth of this episode, the fame of the Pope increased. He interceded also with Genseric during the second sack of Rome that "the city should not be injured and that the lives of the inhabitants should be spared." (Catholic Encyclopedia, *Pope St. Leo I*)

Pope Leo I was also a stout supporter of the unity of the Church and the primacy of the bishop of Rome. In a letter (letter 14) to Anastasius, the bishop of Thessalonica, he wrote that "the care of the universal Church should converge towards Peter's one seat, and nothing anywhere should be separated from its Head." (Catholic Encyclopedia, *Pope Leo to Anastasius bishop of Thessalonica*).

After various centuries in which different powers dominated, in their turns, parts of Italy and of the Western Empire (Visigoths, Vandals, Huns, Ostrogoths, the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I, the Lombards), finally a new power emerged that would play (directly or indirectly) a significant role in the development of the Church and of Churchism: the Franks.

Clovis I (c. 466 - 511) reunited the Frankish tribes and became king of the Franks from 481- 482 till 511. The expansion of Christianity and of the Church of Rome received a powerful boost when the king converted to Christianity. There were several reasons for this conversion: the pressures from his Christian wife Clotilde, the vow made on the occasion of a successful battle, the friendship with the bishop of Reims (the future Saint Remi), the clerical elements that were powerful within the population.

According to Hans Küng (1999), there were some events that marked the formation of a new paradigm characterized by the affirmation of the Roman Catholic Church in Western Europe. Amongst them he lists :

- the fall of the Western Roman Empire (476) that introduced a vacuum of power and prestige that, in the course of time, would be filled by the Popes and the Church.

- the baptism of king Clovis (498 or 499) that expanded Christianity into a vast kingdom of Europe and endowed the Church with a

new protector who would be generous with his resources (for instance, by building many churches).

- the arrival onto the scene of Muhammad (c. 570 - c. 632) who in 622, operating from Medina, drafted the Charter of Medina aiming at ending all fighting between various Arab tribal and religious communities. In the end, he took control also of Mecca and united Arabia under a single religious polity.

The vacuum of power in the West and the arrival of the new Muslim power (Islam) in the East, perceived as a menace, contributed then to the rise of the Papacy and of the Catholic Church as universal spiritual protector of the people. However, the Papacy in its turn needed a secular protector of Christianity in place of the Eastern Roman Emperor, and the choice fell on the Carolingian dynasty that was, at that time, the most important power in Europe.

Already in 739, Pope Gregory III had sent ambassadors to Charles Martel (c. 688 - 741), the Carolingian who, as Mayor of the Palace was *de facto* the ruler of the Franks, asking him to intervene against the Lombard king Liutprand who was threatening Rome. On that occasion, Pope Gregory stated that he would stop seeking the consent of the Byzantine exarch of Ravenna for his election and was willing to place himself under the protection of the Franks. Albeit unsuccessful in his request, the foundation had been laid for a reciprocal support between the Carolingians and the Papacy. Already with the son of Charles Martel, Pepin the Short (c. 714 – 768) we see the formation of an understanding leading to the proclamation of Pepin as king of the Franks with the approval and blessing of Pope Zachary.

The culminating point of this process took place during mass at Christmas Day of the year 800, in Saint Peter Basilica in Rome, when Charlemagne (the son of Pepin) knelt at the altar to pray, and Pope Leo III put on his head the crown declaring him *Imperator Romanorum* (Emperor of the Romans). For Charlemagne it was a prestigious title that raised him to the highest possible level in the West, as far as earthly power was concerned. For Pope Leo, it was not only the way to confirm and certify the Carolingian dynasty as protector of the Church but also a visible sign asserting the

supremacy of the bishop of Rome and of the spiritual power over the secular one, by enthroning (and, if the case, dethroning) imperial rulers.

### The predominance of Churchism

The coronation of Charlemagne by Pope Leo III marked a passage towards the predominance of the Church in the Western world. The major steps in this march towards supremacy have been:

- The political acceptance. Constantine accepted and favoured the Christian religion within the fold of the Empire; Theodosius made it the official religion of the Empire and started opposing pagans and heretics; Justinian I (c. 482- 565) became the *defensor* of orthodoxy and the suppressor of other creeds, particularly paganism. In this phase, the Church was rising to a position of pre-eminence over other religious groups and cults. But it was still the Emperor who, in the name of *Christ Pantocrator*, was taking decisions in matter of religion, except those already regulated by dogmas.

- The theoretical elaboration. In the West, the growing feebleness of the imperial power contributed to the development, based on the thinking of St. Augustine, of a *Heavenly City* (The City of God) distinct and superior to the earthly city (the city of man). The ideas and writings of St Augustine helped to justify not only the supremacy of the Church over any other power, but also the fact that every temporal power should be an instrument at the service of the Church for the suppression of dissidents and heretics. For some "Augustine was the dark genius of Imperial Christianity, the ideologue of the Church-State alliance, and the fabricator of the medieval mentality." (Paul Johnson, 1976)

- The practical implementation. One of the aims of the catholic Popes was to build up a territorial base that would grant to them a certain material strength and cushioning space vis-à-vis other territorial powers. From this perspective we must understand the request, by the Popes, and the concession, by the Carolingians kings, of territories that would become the Papal States and would remain under

the rule of the Popes until 1870. This early acquisition of territories by the Church is known as the Donation of Pepin (756), that was confirmed and extended in 774 by his son Charlemagne. To underpin the claims, by the Church, to territorial possessions, Pope Leo IX, in a letter to Michael Cærularius, Patriarch of Constantinople, would refer (1054) to a document, the *Donation of Constantine*, that, later (1439-1440), would be exposed as a fake by the Catholic priest Lorenzo Valla. According to that document the Emperor Constantine would have transferred to the Popes the authority over Rome and the Western part of the Empire.

During all those centuries, and at least until the time of the papacy of Gregory VII (1073-1085), the dominance of the Church should not be seen at all as paramount.

The Byzantine emperors and the Carolingian kings both intervened in matters of creed and in the election of ecclesiastical personnel. This prompted a scholar of Church history to say that, at that time "neither in the West nor in the East do we find any trace of a primacy of a papal jurisdiction." (Hans Küng, 1999). And an historian remarked that "the fusion of the temporal and spiritual power was far more complete in the Carolingian state than it had been in the Christian barbarian kingdoms, or even in the Byzantine Empire." (Christopher Dawson, 1950). In fact, under the Carolingians, the "bishop, no less than the count, was appointed and controlled by the emperor and acted with the count as joint representative of the imperial authority." (Christopher Dawson, 1950)

We assist, nevertheless, to a growing pretension of moral superiority by the Popes over every existing secular power. This claim was generally considered appropriate by the fact that, at least in the West, a divine legitimization to royal sovereignty was seen, by most people, as necessary for accepting and respecting a secular ruler. In other words, instead of a pretended divine origin of the king (descending from pagan gods), a person became king by the grace of God (*Gratia Dei rex*), through his representative on earth, the Roman *Pontifex*. (Hans Küng 1999).

It must also be said that the claim of moral superiority asserted by

the Church and her Popes was, in many cases, well deserved. In fact the Papacy also enjoyed a reflected aura of esteem in virtue of the spiritual acts and benevolent activities of many churchmen and churchwomen (bishops, abbots, monks, priests, abbesses, nuns, deacons, and simple believers) some of whom would later be declared Saints. However, the purely moral and charitable aspects would perhaps not have sufficed to grant her predominance if the Church, through all its components, had not owned and shown an overall ascendancy under the following aspects:

- Culture. As already underlined, after the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, "the Catholic Church, heir of the culture and of the organization of antiquity, is the only cultural power subsisting in the West." (Hans Küng, 1999). By way of bishops in the cities and monks in the monasteries, the Church succeeded in preserving and transmitting cultural texts and artifacts through the centuries. "The monastic schools and libraries and scriptoria became the chief organs of higher intellectual culture in Western Europe." (Christopher Dawson, 1950)

- Economy. The people attracted by the Christian message, when they united in small communities (monasteries), were also capable of economically transforming the rural environment, tilling new soil, and bringing deserted lands back to cultivation. "At its height, the Benedictine order could boast 37,000 monasteries." (Thomas E. Woods, jr., 2005). St. Benedict's rule, *Ora et Labora*, meant that all these monasteries were also centres of production and "agricultural colleges" for the whole region in which they were located (in Thomas E. Woods, jr., 2005).

- Organization. The Church, counting on literate personnel and a growing number of resources, by way of gifts and the collection of payments, was also capable of setting up an internal central administration (the *Curia*) modelled in some ways on the old imperial Roman administration. That will be, in its turn, copied by the rulers of the future nation states. At the same time, the bishop-counts were becoming, from the time of emperor Otto I (912 - 973) "the central figure in the administration of the Empire" (Christopher Dawson,

1950) establishing a close alliance between the Papacy and the Empire.

According to some scholars, "the chief reason for its [the Church's] success was that it was not anchored in any particular racial, geographical, social or political context." (Paul Johnson, 1976). This allowed for universal predication and proselytism that took place in various parts of Europe (Spain, Germany, Ireland, England, Poland, etc.).

The success in converting people built up to a point in which the old aspiration of Gelasius I (Pope from 492 to 496) of a Church independent from and superior to any imperial power came again to the fore.

And it found expression through the action of a Benedictine monk, Hildebrand of Sovana, who was raised to the Pontifical See in 1073 and took the name of Gregory VII (1073-1085). At that time, the intromission of the Emperor in electing bishops and even in controlling the election and dismissal of the Popes had reached such a point that, to stop this practice, in 1059 a synod, presided over by Pope Nicholas II, was convened in Rome, and approved the decision that only the college of cardinals could elect the Pope. In this way, the Roman aristocracy and the German Emperor were excluded from meddling in ecclesiastical affairs at the highest level.

One of the first acts of Pope Gregory VII was the formulation of a program (*Dictatus Papae*, 1075) that, in 27 statements, affirmed the authority of the Pope on every power on earth, the supremacy of the Pope over the entire clergy and the infallibility of the Catholic Church.

The most important step towards affirming the overall autonomy and supremacy of the Church was to exclude the German Emperor from electing bishops. The achievement of this objective resulted in what is known as the Conflict of Investitures. The conflict set the Pope, Gregory VII, against the Emperor Henry IV who refused to give up what he considered an imperial prerogative and was then excommunicated (1076). At that moment, sensing the risk of losing all legitimacy in the eyes of barons and the people, and so all influence and



power, the Emperor decided to submit to the Pope and went to Canossa (1077) to ask for forgiveness.

The *Conflict of the Investitures* was finally resolved by the Emperor Henry V and Pope Callixtus II with the Concordat of Worms (1122), in which the granting of spiritual authority and symbols to the ecclesiastical hierarchy was removed from the Emperor and reserved only to the Pope. The Emperor was recognized as having the right to invest bishops with secular authority ("by the lance") but not with spiritual authority ("by ring and staff").

Gregory VII was not fully successful in his fight for Church supremacy, as the emperor Henry IV tried again to affirm his power in those matters up to the point of electing and installing an anti-Pope. However, the changes towards a higher morality and autonomy of the Church, introduced by Hildebrand of Sovana, first as a counsellor to Pope Nicholas II (1059-1061) and then as Pope Gregory VII, the so-called Gregorian Reform, survived and led to the apogee of Papacy.

Pope Innocent III (1198 – 1216) was the Pope who expressed very clearly the idea and aspiration of the superiority of the spiritual power with respect to any secular power. In a Letter to the prefect Acerbius and the nobles of Tuscany (1198) he stated :

“Just as the founder of the universe has constituted two great luminaries in the firmament of heaven, ... so too He set two great dignities in the firmament of the Universal Community ... the greater one to rule the day, that is, souls, and the lesser to rule the night, that is, bodies. These dignities are the papal authority and the royal power. Now just as the moon derives its light from the sun and is indeed lower than it in quantity and quality, in position and in power, so too the royal power derives the splendor of its dignity from the pontifical authority.” (Sidney Z. Ehler and John B. Morrall, eds., 1954)

Under Pope Innocent III

"Rome is the unquestionable centre of European policy" and "Innocent III is really the master of the world - not in the sense of an absolute dominance, but as arbiter and supreme sovereign." (Hans Küng, 1999)

Nevertheless, the struggle between Papacy and Empire that resulted in the separation between ecclesiastical authority and secular power, weakened both, in the end, and planted the seeds for the emergence, in the course of time, of new actors: the territorial sovereign states. (Hendrik Spruyt, 1994).

### The beginnings of Statism

The "triumphal pontificate [of Innocent III] marks not only an apogee [for the papacy] but also a turning point." (Hans Küng, 1999)

The signs of this transformation had already been manifest at the turn of the millennium and they were accentuated with the passing of time. They were:

- The centralization: the Church as *ecclesia* (assembly of the community) was increasingly replaced by the Church as hierarchy having at the top a figure, the Pope, to which full obedience had to be given because he was the representative of God on earth. The Roman Curia became the organism that implemented this hierarchical centralization, administering the Church from the centre in a way that will be replicated by the future territorial states.

- The bureaucratization: the Curia came to be "primarily a legal organization, with over a hundred experts employed there by the thirteenth century, plus other lawyers who looked after the interests of kings, princes and leading ecclesiastics." (Paul Johnson, 1976). This was a time when law was more important than theology, as remarked by Roger Bacon in his *Opus Tertium* (1267) : "More praise is gained in the Church of God by a civil jurist ... than by any master in theology, and he is more quickly promoted to high ecclesiastical positions."

- The clericalization: the differentiation between clergy and laity, that was practically non-existent in the early years of the Church,

became an established reality. As a matter of fact, it was the conflict between the Pope and the Emperor that led to the (necessary and inevitable) separation between the ecclesiastical personnel and the secular apparatus (see Hendrik Spruyt, 1994). At the same time, this contributed to the formation of a clergy that, in many cases, would detach itself from the communities of the faithful and would dominate all, in alliance with secular rulers.

- The militarization: the formation of territorial Papal States required, for the defence of the territory, the establishment of an army. When it was necessary, alliances were made with secular sovereigns to get the papal territories protected through their armies. Moreover, some sections and personages within the Church became increasingly militant in their fight against all those who had different ideas (called "heretics") and creeds (Jews, Muslims) and promoted the use of violent means against them. This in open violation of the message of Jesus Christ and even of the prescriptions of Pope Innocent III (see, for instance, the *Decree of 1199 on the Jews* : "We decree that no Christian shall use violence to compel the Jews to accept baptism.")

By developing these features, the spiritual universal Church increasingly lost the characteristics of spirituality and universality and became another secular territorial power; one amongst the many. This process of transformation reached its peak during the Renaissance when the Popes were nothing other than "simple Italian princes" (Hans Küng, 1999) involved in political intrigues, and interested less in the *Evangelium secundum Marcum* (Gospel according to Mark) and more in the *Evangelium secundum Marcam* (Gospel according to the mark - i.e. money).

In a certain way, Statism must be seen to have its origins in the Church and in some policies promoted by the Church. A starting point could be ascribed to the preaching of a Crusade with the declared aim of liberating Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre from the presence of the Seljuk Turks, a Moslem population that had captured Jerusalem in 1076 and had closed that route to the East to pilgrims and merchants.

So, when in 1095 Pope Urban II launched from Clermont in Auvergne (France) an appeal to a Crusade, responding also to a pressing request for aid against the Turks from the Byzantine Emperor (Christian Orthodox), many elements were conducive to the starting of an adventure larger than life. In fact, under the impulse and justification of spiritual aspirations (to pray before the Holy Sepulchre) the first Crusade offered the pretext and the justification for pursuing all sorts of political, military, commercial interests (to kings, barons, merchants, entrepreneurs, etc.) and personal adventures (to those who wanted to get away from pestering creditors, pitiless magistrates, authoritarian parents, obnoxious wives, exploiting masters and whatever else). All this with the full encouragement and blessing of the Holy Catholic Church.

Eventually, the expansionist and commercial interests replaced completely any trace of spiritual fervour and Christian ardour. "The men of the Fourth Crusade (1200-1204) [the one dominated by Venice] did not even enter the Holy Land" (Henry Treece, 1962) and concentrated on the burning and sacking of Constantinople (1204). And this, as usual, "in a vainglorious and always treacherous pretence of furthering the interests of Christianity." (Henry Treece, 1962)

The result was, instead, a total poisoning of the relationships between the Churches (East and West) that would last for centuries.

The Crusades also provided the opportunity to the King of France to appear as the *Rex Christianissimus*, anointed by God, and, on that basis, also the confidence that will lead him to withstand, in due time, the will of any Pope. The occasion presented itself when Pope Boniface VIII signed the Bull *Clericis Laicos* (1296) in which he reaffirmed that only the Pope was authorised to tax the clergy. This prescription was made in order to avoid a situation where the clergy was taxed for financing the war between the king of France (Philip IV) and the king of England (Edward I) over the Duchy of Aquitaine.

However, both kings reacted to the Bull with political and economic measures that damaged the interests of the Papacy (e.g. seizing Church land, forbidding the export of bullion and so drying up the flux of money towards the Holy See).

So, the Pope had to back down and the Bull was practically repealed and replaced by a new more accommodating one (*Etsi de statu*, 1297) that allowed taxation of the clergy in case of emergencies.

In France, the King was supported by bishops, nobles, and laymen over which he exerted a direct control. It was the beginning of the formation of a national powerbase that would be increasingly successful against the universal claims of the papacy. In fact, Philip IV, against the will of the Pope, supported by previous agreements (Concordat of Worms, 1122), was electing and dismissing bishops as he wished and was laying the foundations for a Gallican church, obedient to the secular power.

To stop this practice, the Pope first warned the king (Letter *Ausculda fili*, 1301) and then excommunicated him (Bull *Unam Sanctam*, 1302) because of his insouciance and intromission in what were Church matters and Church autonomy. The Bull reaffirmed the supremacy of spiritual authority over secular power in the most forceful terms. However, the climate had changed to such a point that the secular power could now perform with impunity actions that were inconceivable in the previous century. So, it is appropriate to say that the “pontificate [of Boniface VIII] marks in history the decline of the medieval power and glory of the papacy.” (Catholic Encyclopedia, *Boniface VIII*)

In fact, what happened was that, as reprisal, the King sent his Minister, Guillaume de Nogaret who, leading a band of adventurers and enemies of the Pope, entered the small town of Anagni (Lazio) where the Pope was residing at that time. The Pope suffered physical humiliation and maltreatment culminating in the famous *schiaffo di Anagni* (Anagni slap). The killing of the Pope was also suggested by one of Nogaret allies, Sciarra Colonna, but the plan was to take him prisoner to France. However, the situation turned bad for Guillaume de Nogaret and his band when the people of Anagni rose against the Pope captivity and Nogaret was forced to retreat in a hurry. The Pope died a month later (11 October 1303) probably as a consequence of the physical and psychological trauma of the event.

The king Philip IV, with the various decisions and actions he took

during his reign, could be rightly seen as one of the major destroyers of Churchism and founders of Statism. Under Philip IV, what will become a permanent fixture of the modern states, i.e. the constant drive to capture resources, was much in evidence. It resulted in the intensive exploitation of large sections of his own people. Amongst his many political acts on the way to Statism and State dominance we have:

- the imprisonment and expulsion of Jews and the expropriation of their properties (July 1306).
- the disallowance of his debts towards rich abbots and Lombard merchants and bankers, the latter ones being expelled from France and their property confiscated.
- the levy of taxes on the French clergy of one half their annual income.
- the suppression and practical extermination of the Knights Templar, a Christian military and commercial Order that was extraordinarily wealthy and to whom the king was deeply in debt. In 1307, in France many of the Order's members were arrested, tortured, and burned at the stake.

Philip VI was also responsible for two big debasements that, from then on, must be ascribed to almost every state ruler and are intrinsic to the practice of Statism:

- the debasement of the currency: by 1306 the French units of coinage (*livres*, *sous* and *deniers*) had lost two-thirds of their value. Riots erupted in Paris and Philip was forced to find refuge in the headquarters of the Knights Templar, the very same ones that he would eradicate and exterminate shortly afterwards.
- the debasement of the Church: after the death of Boniface VIII (1303) there began a period of dominance over the Church by the French State, known as the Avignon Papacy (1309-1378) or “Babylonian captivity”. This was a sort of strict control over seven Popes, all French, that were either puppets of the French Crown (like Clemens V who was a pawn in the hands of Philip IV in the persecution of the Knights Templar) or strongly under its influence.

The fourteenth century represented then a turning point not only

for the final transformation of the hierarchy of the Church into a secular State, but also for the birth of secular States (France, England) that, in due course, will take the role (moral, cultural, administrative) played once by the Church.

Petrarch, who spent many years of his life in and around Avignon, expressed in a letter to a friend (*Epystole sine nomine*, V, 1340-1353) his strongly negative impressions about the life at the Papal court:

“Instead of holy solitude we find a criminal host and crowds of the most infamous satellites; instead of soberness, licentious banquets; instead of pious pilgrimages, preternatural and foul sloth; instead of the bare feet of the apostles, the snowy coursers of brigands fly past us, the horses decked in gold and fed on gold, soon to be shod with gold, if the Lord does not check this slavish luxury.” (in Leon Bernard and Theodore B. Hodges, eds., 1958)

If the king Philip IV of France was the practical promoter of national state dominance and so of Statism, the theoretical ammunitions were provided by a series of thinkers and writers that emerged from the XIII to the XVI centuries : Marsilius of Padua (1275-1342); William of Ockham (1280-1349); Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), Jean Bodin (1530-1596).

Marsilius of Padua in his *Defensor Pacis* (1324), written with Jean de Jandun, canon of Senlis (Northern France), intended to show that the Emperor was independent from the Pope and did not necessitate any confirmation of his power from an external authority. The general attitude of Marsilius was to "check the incursions of the spiritual authority into the concerns of the self-sufficient community." (George Sabine, 1951). Starting from that preoccupation he elaborated a view that confined the Church to spiritual matters and, for all the rest, put the clergy under the jurisdiction of state power. The Pope was subject to the decisions of the general ecumenical councils and the Church, on the whole, was bound by the laws and authority of the community. "The community elects the parish priest and supervises and controls the clergy in the performance of their duties; in a word — the

community or the state is everything, the Church playing an entirely subsidiary part. It cannot legislate, adjudicate, possess goods, sell, or purchase without authorization; it is a perpetual minor." (Catholic Encyclopedia, *Marsilius of Padua*).

While Marsilius, moving from a radical critique of the supremacy of the Pope, arrived to assign to the civil community (represented by the secular state) and to the Emperor almost absolute powers, William of Ockham, a Franciscan friar educated in Oxford and Paris, was interested in more spiritual problems. So his critique of the Pope was addressed to his abuses, while recognizing the authority of the Church in spiritual matters and advocating a return to the simplicity and poverty of the original message.

William of Ockham "stood upon the ancient distinction and independence of the spiritual and temporal authorities" (George Sabine, 1951) that will be taken up by liberal thinkers in a subsequent period. However, this distinction will be, later, implemented as a *de facto* subordination of the spiritual to the secular power, given the continuous extension of the sphere of control of the latter with respect to the former.

The Church, weakened by her servility to a temporal ruler (during the Avignon Papacy, 1309-1378) and by temporal interests (to amass riches and power) was then further shaken by intestine clashes that would result at a later stage (1409) in three individuals claiming to be Popes at the same time (the so-called Western Schism from 1378 to 1417). Eventually, after the Council of Constance (1414), all three pretended Popes were dismissed and in 1417 the assembly of the cardinals elected the new Pope who took the name of Martin V.

But more negative facts and acts would characterize the Church during the XV century. One of them was the permission to institute the Spanish Inquisition granted to the "very catholic" Queen Isabel and King Ferdinand. In 1478, Pope Sixtus IV, after some hesitations and a lot of external pressure, promulgated the Papal Bull *Exigit Sinceras Devotionis Affectus* by which the Tribunal of the Inquisition was established in the Kingdom of Castile and later extended to the whole of Spain. By way of the Spanish Inquisition, the Queen and



King succeeded in eliminating and expropriating the property of Jews and Muslims and founding a new national state. This was clearly and poignantly remarked by Machiavelli with reference to Ferdinand of Aragon:

“servendosi sempre della religione si volse a una pietosa crudeltà, cacciando e spogliando el suo regno de' Marrani” [“always using religion as a plea, he devoted himself with a pious cruelty to driving out and clearing his kingdom of the Moors.”] (Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, XXI, 1513)

Overall, the Church, as Pontifical States, had now become an Italian principality, and the Popes, most Italians, were nothing else than princes within an Italian court. Spiritual religion was supplanted by interests of power, with the Popes, as territorial princes, aiming at the political control of the Italian peninsula. The clearest exponent of this policy was Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503), of which Machiavelli wrote :

“di tutti i pontefici che sono stati mai, mostrò quanto uno papa e con il danaio e con le forze si posseva prevalere.” [“of all the pontiffs that have ever been, he showed how a pope, with both money and arms, was able to prevail.”] (Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, XI, 1513)

His son, Cesare Borgia, was taken by Machiavelli as the epitome of what a Prince should be. So, it is appropriate to say that the Church of those times, after having abandoned the original spiritual message of love and charity, was now nothing else than a secular power. As such, it was preparing and showing the way for Statism, that would impose itself once the new power, the State, would be ready for the task.

However, the Church was still considered, in the West, to be an overall power, with many internal currents of thought and action that were still faithful to the original message. But this would change at the beginning of the XVI century with a breaking up of the Church

between Roman Catholics and reformed Protestants. This further weakening of the Church will mark the rise of the States as a new power and of Statism as a new religion for the centuries ahead.

### **The rise of Statism**

The fight against the Papacy, beginning with the Emperor and continuing with the kings of France and England, prepared the terrain for the release of temporal powers from the external authority of the Church. The fact that the Church:

(a) had fallen, during the Avignon Papacy, under the tutelage of a particular secular ruler, the king of France,

(b) had, later, become a territorial state, more interested in fulfilling political and economic objectives than pursuing spiritual aims,

encouraged secular powers and some ecclesiastical subjects to object to it and, eventually, to detach themselves fully from the control and approval of Rome.

The Pope in Rome was seen as a foreign ruler, an intruder and exploiter, at a time in which the idea of nationhood was taking roots.

In Germany, the sale of the indulgences (for the re-building of Saint Peter in Rome), in which the Dominican friar Johann Tetzel played the role of the commercial peddler, was the spark that motivated Martin Luther to write a protesting letter to his bishop, Albert of Mainz (31 October 1517). In one of the Ninety-five theses enclosed in that letter, Martin Luther asked:

"Why does the pope, whose wealth today is greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus, build the basilica of St. Peter with the money of poor believers rather than with his own money?" (Thesis 86) (in Roland H. Bainton, 1956)

The sale of indulgences was one of the many signs of the degeneration of the Church and, more specifically, of some parts of the hierarchy in Europe. The need for a moral reformation was, at that time,

felt by many sectors of the Christian world. So, when in January 1518 the Theses were translated from Latin into German and printed (the printing press in the West dating from around 1450), they circulated widely in Germany and in other regions of Europe.

The reaction of the Pope (Leo X), through his envoys, oscillated between conciliation and repression, but eventually, Luther was threatened with arrest and burning at the stake if he did not recant.

Martin Luther, in his turn, branded the Pope as the Anti-Christ and this led to his excommunication in 1520. During the Diet of Worms (1521) Luther was declared an outlaw, his writings were banned, and his arrest required. At that point Frederick III, the elector of Saxony, placed him under his protection. That marked the beginning of a conservative turn of position by the protestant reformer.

The favour encountered by Luther with the German populace for his writing and preaching was linked to the fact that he was seen as the opponent of the malpractice of the Roman clergy. Now, fully detaching himself from Rome, Luther became or "was pressed into becoming a spokesman of the German nation." (Lewis W. Spitz, 1985) represented by his more powerful exponents, the German princes.

Martin Luther sided with them during the repression of the peasant's rebellion (1524-25) proclaiming that the authorities are appointed by God and should not be resisted (divine rights of the rulers). The princes established in 1531 the Schmalkaldic League that promoted Lutheranism in their territories and reaped economic advantages by breaking from the Catholic Church. The League "perfected the link between Lutheran reform and political power." (Hans Küng, 1999).

In fact, "all rulers, Protestants included, inherited from the Christian Roman Empire the view that a State cannot thrive without the support of religion. Only one religion can be true, and that religion should be upheld by the State." (Roland H. Bainton, 1956). Even better if it is a state religion, where the State is the guide and protector of the faithful and of the clergy.

With the spread of Lutheranism and of other reformist churches

we achieve exactly that: the arrival of a national church grounded on the State and, in some cases, set up by the State.

“At Luther’s time the Church ... sought shelter under the roof of the State. She borrowed from the State the essential elements of her spiritual and administrative organization and therefore ... became an annexe or a department or a ward of the State.” (Adolf Keller, 1936)

In England, for instance, the king Henry VIII succeeded in having himself proclaimed “the only Supreme Head on Earth of the Church of England” (*Act of Supremacy*, 1534).

In Sweden, “the introduction of Lutheranism was tied in with the drive for national independence from Denmark between the years 1521 and 1523.” (Lewis W. Spitz, 1985).

All this is nothing new, when you consider that King Ferdinand and Queen Isabel of Spain had used the Catholic religion to promote the formation of their national state.

The condemnation by Martin Luther of Anabaptists and Jews was the logical consequence of his views of a religion in tune with political state power. He found abhorrent the position of the so-called Anabaptists (as they were named by their opponents) who questioned the right of the political rulers to impose their religious will on the people.

As for the Jews, Luther advised:

“First, to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them.”

“Second, ... that their houses also be razed and destroyed.”

“Third, ... that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing, and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them.”

“Fourth, ... that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb.”

“Fifth, ... that safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews.”

“Sixth, ... that usury be prohibited to them, and that all cash and

treasure of silver and gold be taken from them and put aside for safekeeping." (Martin Luther, 1543)

It seems then appropriate to say that the Protestant Reformation has upheld and strengthened the "authoritarian state and the absolutism of the princes" and that, by that way, "the local prince became in the end a sort of pope in his territory" (Hans Küng, 1999).

This fact was confirmed by the stipulation of the Peace of Augsburg (1555) between the emperor Charles V and the Schmalkaldic League of the Lutheran princes that officially ended the struggle between Catholic and Lutherans and marked the division between Christians in what was still the Holy Roman Empire. By the formula "*cuius regio, eius religio*" it was sanctioned that the religion of the ruler prevailed over the free will of the individual. It was an important passage towards the overall juridical pre-eminence of secular power, "a supreme assertion of the civil power." (Walter Lippmann, 1929). Anabaptists like Menno Simons (1496-1561) in the Low Countries were not at all pleased by this and declared :

"Where do the Holy Scriptures teach that in Christ's kingdom and Church, conscience and faith ... are to be regulated and ruled by the violence, tyranny, and sword of the magistrate?" (Harold S. Bender, 1955).

Nevertheless, this was the new state of things to come, and everybody had to accommodate to it or suffer the consequences.

In England, as previously pointed out, Henry VIII took the pretext of the refusal by the Pope Clement VII to allow the dissolution of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon (the youngest child of Ferdinand and Isabella) in order to set up his own Church (1531). That refusal by the Pope was also consequence of the fact that he was, at that time, hostage of Catherine's nephew, the emperor Charles V. Only a few years earlier the imperial troops of Charles V had gone on a rampage because they hadn't been paid and had pillaged the city of the Pope in what was known as the sack of Rome (1527). The Pope had to take

safety in the refuge of Castel Sant'Angelo, and, as a result, the authority and the prestige of the Pope had been drastically diminished. He was forced to pay a ransom of 400,000 ducati and agree to the cession of Parma, Piacenza, Civitavecchia, and Modena to the Holy Roman Empire (although, only the last could be occupied in fact), while Venice took Cervia and Ravenna, and Sigismondo Malatesta recaptured, at least for a certain period, Rimini. In other words, the territories of the Papal States were up for grabs.

It was at about the same time that Henry VIII broke with Rome and started the process that would be known as the English Reformation. Here again, political reasons (independence from Rome), mixed with economic ones (taking over the wealth of the Church), conjured up the national Anglican Church. The roots of this move could be traced long before, when the knights of King Henry II had entered Canterbury cathedral and had murdered the Archbishop Thomas Becket (1170) during the conflict that set the king against the Pope about the rights and prerogatives of the Church.

Now, another Thomas, the Lord Chancellor Thomas More, opposed the policies of the king who sought a separation from the Catholic Church and the formation of the Church of England, with the king as the supreme head. For this reason, after his abandonment of the chancellorship, he was accused of high treason, imprisoned in the Tower of London, and condemned to execution by decapitation (6 July 1535).

As supreme Head of the Church of England, the king had free hands in matters of economic appropriation. To buttress financially his power, he introduced a series of legal and administrative measures by which he disbanded monasteries, priories, convents, and friaries and appropriated their land and income to the State, and in effect to the Crown. He also ordered the murdering of various abbots like the abbot of Glastonbury Abbey, Richard Whiting, who was eighty at that time. "He was, however, dragged on a hurdle to the top of a hill, overlooking his once beautiful abbey, which had been partially laid in ruins, and when 'he would confess no more gold and silver,' was hanged and quartered." (John L. Stoddard, 1921).

The First (1536) and the Second (1539) Acts of Suppression of Religious Houses put at the king's disposal a wealth of financial resources that is difficult to estimate. An approximate figure is obtainable considering that "the total annual net income of the religious order had been assessed in 1535 by the commissioners for the Tenth at a little over £136,000, but, because of omission from and underestimates in their survey, the true figure was probably nearer to £175,000 or nearly three quarters as much as the average annual income of the crown at the same date." (G.W.O. Woodward. 1966). The Church in England (The Anglican Church) was now controlled by the State and economically subservient to the State and to its head, the King of England.

In France, the ascension of the State to a central role was marked by the arrival on the throne of Henry IV (1589-1610). A protestant (Huguenot) King of Navarre, he showed, with his conversion to Catholicism, made to surmount the opposition to his becoming king of France (*Paris vaut bien une messe* - "Paris is well worth a mass"), that spiritual religion and theological disputations should not be an obstacle to the exercise of power and to social harmony. Henry IV is also remembered as the promoter of the *Edict of Nantes* (1598) that, by allowing Huguenots (French Calvinists Protestants) a certain freedom to practice their creed, put a stop to religious persecution that had been rife in France during the XVI century. Those clashes, apparently motivated by questions of faith, were, actually, factional fights between the House of Bourbon and the House of Guise aimed at achieving what is the goal of almost any war: the monopoly of power.

And precisely because of this motive, i.e. the constant aspiration to monopolize power, the *Edict of Nantes* could not last for long. The catholic majority, for political reasons, resented the protestant minority and circulated the rumour that they had created a state within a state (Carl J. Burkhardt, 1935). So, after the assassination of Henry IV (1610) by a fanatic who reproached the king for failing to protect the catholic faith, tolerance towards the protestants became increasingly weak. It vanished under Louis XIV who proclaimed the

*Edict of Fontainebleau* (1685) which revoked the *Edict of Nantes* and made the practice of Protestantism a crime to be persecuted.

The real motive behind all this is the formation of an absolute cultural uniformity between royal subjects in view of what will be called, in later centuries, the national identity. Homogenization of creed and centralization of power were considered necessary conditions for the affirmation of the French State and, therefore, of the absolute power of his King.

The work of installing the national state as a superior entity, was carried out in France during the XVII century and was performed by two personalities who would play a decisive role. What is apparently paradoxical is that they both belonged to the high hierarchy of the Catholic Church: Cardinal Richelieu and Cardinal Mazarin.

In fact, while Henry IV had been willing to become Catholic and attend catholic masses to reach state power, the Catholic Cardinal Richelieu and Cardinal Mazarin were willing to celebrate all sort of political masses for the glory of the King and the power of the State. In all these cases spiritual religion was a simple pretext for enjoying and exerting power.

Richelieu has been the clearest exponent of a national Church operating for the formation of a national state. As the leader of a national Church, he was an implacable enemy of all heretics, that is all who did not abide by his own creed, and so, all possible dissenters and disturbers of the royal power. For this reason he dismantled the Huguenot stronghold of La Rochelle and squashed every possible opposition against the king amongst the landed aristocracy. As a promoter of the national State he was ready to ally himself with any sovereign (Protestant or Muslim) to weaken what was seen, at that time, as the defender, in Europe, of the catholic faith, the House of Habsburg, and, with it, to put an end to the Spanish hegemony. And all the time Richelieu was preoccupied to make clear, first to his King, Louis XIII, that "he is at the king's service and not at that of the Pope's." (Carl J. Burkhardt, 1935).

In fact, "... nobody could be more zealous in defending the 'state' against the church in Rome than Richelieu himself - to the point that



he has often been regarded as its true founder." (Martin van Creveld, 1999)

The overall aim was the building of a strong French National State in which the Catholic faith would be only the cultural glue to justify and solidify the submission of the people to the central power of the King and his State.

This took place during the reign of Louis XIV, under the initial supervision of Cardinal Mazarin (1602-1661). As chief minister (1643-1661) he increased the power of the king by weakening the aristocracy and undermining Parliament. During his regency, Mazarin prepared the terrain for the absolute power of the *Roi Soleil* to fully emerge and be displayed. Absolute power means one power dominating all and everyone. This was condensed in the formula : *un roi, une foi, une loi*. Cardinal Mazarin was also the mind behind the drafting of the peace accords known as the Treaties of Westphalia (1648) that re-drew the chart of Europe after the Thirty Years War and officially sanctioned the existence of the fully sovereign territorial state.

State absolutism was manifested in a series of acts that characterized the reign of Louis XIV: from the forced conversion and persecution of the Huguenots, to the ambition of becoming the new master of Europe by way of continuous wars (against the Low Countries, Austria and Spain).

However, it was not royal absolutism that, in the end, would install the State as the acceptable and unquestionable power and point of reference in the lives of people. Absolutism, in fact, weakened the State by fostering internal conflicts and, in some cases, despoiled society by causing the departure of the most energetic and brilliant individuals. For instance, 250,000 Huguenots left France after the repeal of the Edict of Nantes and brought their skills and knowledge for the advancement and development of other societies.

The final predominance of Statism has been, in large measure, the direct and indirect consequence of the emergence of a current of ideas which was given the name of Enlightenment, and which was opposed to many dogmas of the past. Moreover, the formation and diffusion of a scientific method of investigation would give rise to the

development of technological tools that contributed to a tremendous increase in material production.

All this would eventually break down the medieval paradigm based on Church and spiritual religion and lead to the coming to dominance of the State and of the secular religion.

There was a visible turning point in which this momentous change, prepared during centuries, became manifest to all.

In June 1870, two ecclesiastical doctrines were proclaimed: the juridical primacy of the Pope over every national Church and Christian subject; and the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope in the exercise of his *magisterium* of faith. Two months later, in September 1870, the *bersaglieri* entered Rome through the breach of Porta Pia and annexed the city to the Italian State, confining the Pope to a small enclave, the City of Vatican.

So, while the Pope was still immersed in ideas of primacy and infallibility, he was reduced to a sort of recluse, an impotent figure whose temporal power was practically nil and whose spiritual authority was greatly weakened and highly questioned.

At that moment, any trace of Churchism had been almost completely erased.

### **The predominance of Statism**

The rise of Statism was a process that took centuries to be completed. An important passage in this process has been represented by the French Revolution, to which we should add two other revolutions, the Russian and the Fascist Revolution, that led to the complete affirmation of Statism.

The French Revolution was, amongst many other contributory causes, the result of

- the bankruptcy of the parasitic sovereignty of the King, with his cohort of aristocrats and high clergy.
- the diffusion of new ideas (Enlightenment) and the arrival of new protagonists (the commercial bourgeoisie and the so-called liberal professions).

The clash between these two realities produced contradictory outcomes that could be simply characterized as new liberties and new servitudes.

The blockage to social change represented by the traditional powers (the aristocracy as the first estate and the high clergy as the second estate) was put aside, at the start of the French Revolution, by the third estate (low clergy, commercial and professional bourgeoisie) that proclaimed itself as a National Assembly and then National Constituent Assembly which, on August 26, 1789, approved the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.

The principles of the Revolution, that will be condensed in the formula *Liberté – Egalité – Fraternité*, were based, at least in the initial phase of the revolution, on:

- the idea of rationality as the motor of human conduct, against obscurantist traditions and costumes.
- the individual, each one seen on the par with every other, by the suppression of all privileges of birth and status.
- the people as a community linked by fraternal ties of association.

However, quite soon, these three aspects were corrupted and degenerated to such a point that a new despotism, based on a new Church (the State) and a new creed (Statism), started creeping in. In fact it happened that:

- Rationality became a God, and the Cult of the Goddess of Reason (Wikipedia, *Cult of Reason*) was developed as a replacement of the God of Christianity. By referring to this new Goddess it was then permissible to impose all nefarious measures in view of the pretended well-being of humanity.
- The individual became a social atom, a state-subject totally dependent on the almighty State. In fact, all the local groups and communities and voluntary associations

were disbanded as expressions and remnants of the *Ancien Régime*.

- The people became the nation and, as such, they were to be represented by the Nation State.

Whoever opposed this theoretical and actual framework was to be treated as an enemy of the *Peuple* (People) and of the *Patrie* (Fatherland) and crushed by all means (imprisoned, guillotined, exiled).

So, the Revolution, that was supposed to have at its foundation progressive and enlightened ideas, imprisoned and guillotined, amongst other brilliant minds, poets like André Chénier et Jean-Antoine Roucher; emancipated women like Madame Roland and Olympe de Gouges; scientists like Jean Sylvain Bailly, astronomer and mathematician, and Antoine Lavoisier, chemist. With reference to Lavoisier, it seems that a certain Jean-Baptiste Cofinhal, president of the revolutionary Tribunal, declared: “la révolution n'a pas besoin de savants” [revolution doesn't need learned individuals]. And Pierre Gaspard Chaumette, procurator of Paris, qualified Olympe de Gouges as impudent because she “institua des sociétés de femmes et abandonna les soins du ménage pour se mêler de la République” [instituted women's societies and, instead of housekeeping, involved herself with the matters of the Republic].

These statements by highly placed exponents of the Revolution reveal troubling views about a movement that was supposed to be enlightening and progressive.

Overall, during the space of few months (1793-1794) 17.000 citizens were condemned to death according to the official documents, but a more truthful estimate put the figure to around 45.000, if we include those killed without trial (*La Terreur*). Most of them (85%) belonged to the Third Estate, i.e. to the common people on behalf of which the leaders of the Revolution were supposed to act.

Besides that, many exponents and participants to the Revolution showed once again their truly intolerant attitude and behaviour, when they:

- suppressed any popular movement (e.g. the Vendée) that rebelled against the orders emanating from the central state.
- expropriated Church properties and condemned the independent clergy (the one not subservient to the new regime) to submit or leave.

Concerning this latter aspect, it is correct to say that "the revolution, was not at all directed, initially, against the Church" (Hans Küng, 1999) and this because the majority of the churchmen, especially in the countryside and in the small communes, belonged to the low clergy that was sympathetic to the revolutionary principles of freedom, equality, and fraternity. In fact, the text that presented the arguments underpinning the Third Estate and brought it to the attention of everybody was written by the Abbé Sieyès (*Qu'est-ce-que le tiers-état*, 1789). However, very soon, the new National Assembly voted measures that were designed to dramatically weaken the Church and promote the interests of the State and of its associates. According to a contemporary historian "the roots of the revolutionary dechristianisation are to be sought not so much in the action of the church as in the increasingly religious character of the Revolution itself, and the fact that Catholicism came to be seen as a rival and, in some respects, incompatible faith." (Hugh McLeod, 1981)

The main measures voted by the National Assembly that affected, i.e. disrupted, the Church were:

- the properties of the Church were declared to now belong to the Nation and were sold by auction (1789).
- the convents and the religious orders were suppressed (1790).
- the Catholic Church was re-organised along the lines of the state structure, taking the form of a National Church, with general elections for the *curés*. The priests that refused to abide by the Civil Constitution of the Clergy (1790) were expelled from France. Consequently, forty thousand of them were forced to leave (Karl Heussi and Eric Peter, 1967).
- The *Comtat Venaissin* and its main centre, Avignon, that was a Papal territory, was annexed to France in 1791 under the decree of the National Constituent Assembly.

The French Revolution could be seen as a watershed. From now on political religion and political persecutions fully replaced the sectarian violence of the past in which the Church was involved (directly or indirectly) and the state was her secular arm. Now, the state was totally in charge of any massacre, in the name of the nation and of the people, without the need to refer to any external authority.

One of the many examples of this persecutory fury is what happened in Paris from 2 to 6 September 1792 when more than one thousand so-called counter-revolutionary individuals, of which 191 were ecclesiastics, were massacred in a fit of rage after the news that Verdun had been taken by the Prussian troops. A more resounding illustration of the strategy of annihilation implemented by the State is the War in the Vendée (1793-1796) in which the state powers committed such atrocities, and on such a large scale, that a modern historian has qualified them as “a French genocide.” (Reynald Secher, 1986).

The events of the Vendée, in which a mainly Catholic population was butchered by agents of the National State (the number of people exterminated or killed in the fights varies from 120,000 to over 200,000), represents one of the first and most atrocious examples of what a secular religion of modern times can accomplish in terms of extermination.

After such episodes, the Catholic Church in France was under the sway of the French State. So, it should not have come as a surprise that, in 1798, French troops led by general Louis-Alexandre Berthier invaded the city of Rome and took the Pope Pius VI as prisoner to Valence (Department of Drôme) where he died six weeks later (1799).

A way out of this harsh treatment and confrontation with the Church was found in the post-revolutionary phase when the State, in the person of Napoleon Bonaparte, thought it convenient to bring the Catholics on his side and to use the Church as a prop to his secular state religion. So, in 1801 a Concordat was signed between Napoleon and Pope Pius VII by which the Church was given back a certain autonomy, albeit remaining in a position subservient to the state (the bishops were still nominated by the French government, the proper-

ties remained still confiscated, the clergy was still to swear an oath of allegiance to the state).

However, this was the price to pay for surviving: a semblance of independence provided that the Church acted as the main supporter of the State.

During the 19th century the European States continuously expanded their sphere of influence and action in the name of popular sovereignty, nationalism, socialism.

The socialist conception, as elaborated especially by Marx and Engels in England, during the Industrial Revolution, got spread at a time in which the Church, especially in continental Europe, was the subservient justificatory pillar of state Restoration. This was the reason why, to many socialist thinkers, the Church came to be associated with obscurantism and absolutism. The starting sentence of the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) binds together "Pope and Czar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies" as the Powers of the old Europe that have entered into a Holy Alliance in order to keep oppressing and repressing the people.

Within this the scenario, anticlericalism became one of the characteristics of socialist thinking and practice. Less understandable, if not utterly incomprehensible, is the fact that socialism became the ideology that justified the attribution to the State of a large authoritarian power.

In fact, for Marx and Engels "the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." (Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1848). In their views, the development of the capitalistic mode of production would inevitably lead to economic concentration and this, in its turn, would result in state political centralization. The taking over the State by the workers would then be the necessary passage towards the equally necessary and rapid fading away of the State itself, in a progressive move that would have been almost automatic. This was because the capitalists would have developed the means of production and the amount of production to such an extent that the state, as controller and regulator of it, would have become and appeared, very soon, an irrelevant

entity. At that moment "Society, which will reorganise production on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers, will put the whole machinery of state where it will then belong: into the museum of antiquities, by the side of the spinning wheel and the bronze axe." (Friedrich Engels, 1884).

However, things did not turn out that way. A different version of socialism prevailed, inspired by a German politician, Ferdinand Lassalle, who saw the State as the indispensable demiurge for the emancipation of the working class. This aim was marked by a sort of religious fervour. As pointed out by an historian, "Lassalle meetings took on the character of the founding of a new faith. Lassalle himself wrote: 'I had the constant impression this is how it must have been at the founding of a new religion'." (George L. Mosse, 1975). This view characterized the attitudes and political actions of what will become the strongest socialist party of Europe, the Social-Democratic party of Germany, founded in 1875.

The appeal of State Socialism received a huge boost when a supposedly socialist revolution took place in Czarist Russia in 1917, led by a figure, Vladimir Lenin, who professed to refer to Marx and Engels in his thought and action. But the social and economic conditions envisaged by Marx and Engels for the development of socialism were simply non-existent in Russia at that time. So it was claimed that they had to be engineered by the only existing power having a certain weight: the State.

In July 1917 Lenin wrote:

"every state is a special force for the suppression of the oppressed class. Consequently, every state is un-free and non-popular." (Lenin, 1917).

A few months later, after the capture of state power, Lenin, with a sleight of hand, started to present the omnipotent state and its ideology, Statism, as socialism or as the best path towards socialism.

The Russian Revolution was an eastern replica of the French Revolution. Like the French King, the Russian Czar was executed. As



in the French Revolution, lawyers (like Lenin) and propagandists by profession (like Trotsky and Stalin) were the real protagonists. The French reign of terror was paralleled and surpassed by the reign of terror instituted by the Cheka under Lenin and Trotsky. Here too the so-called worker's revolution had to be saved from outside attacks, and this multiplied the repressive actions within. And, as it had happened in France, the properties of the Church were expropriated, and the priests persecuted.

Overall, it was like following the script of a tragedy already performed. The only difference consisted in the fact that, given the non-existence of the bourgeoisie, a new class had to be created in the form of a huge state bureaucracy.

For the people to accept this revolution and follow its leaders, a sort of Messianism had to be introduced in every act of propaganda. Lenin assumed the role of high priest of the revolution, a role that he was to perform even after his death. As remarked by a theologian in a 1936 lecture "Leninism is a camouflaged secular religion" promising and assuring "the coming classless society, the 'Paradise on earth' as Lenin said as early as in 1905 - a new Church of faithless believers, unmasking the old Christian Church and depriving her of her bells, her treasures, her cathedrals and her servants." (Adolf Keller, 1936). The most visible sign of the "sacred" character of Leninism is the Lenin mausoleum, where the corpse of the "prophet" the "Saint Vladimir of the October Revolution" (Michael Burleigh, 2006) is preserved and presented to the faithful for respect and veneration. Later, the same cult would surround Mao-Zedong, whose corpse would be embalmed and preserved in a special mausoleum in the middle of Tiananmen square in Beijing (1977).

The speech delivered by Stalin on the death of Lenin is full of vows, like those made by a believer to a transcendent being:

"Departing from us, comrade Lenin, enjoined us to hold high and guard the purity of the great title of member of the party. We vow to you we shall fulfil your behest with honour!" "Departing from us, comrade Lenin enjoined us to guard and strengthen the dictatorship

of the proletariat. We vow to you, comrade Lenin, that we shall spare no effort to fulfil this behest, too, with honour!" (Joseph Stalin, 1924).

And so on and so forth.

Only if we consider Bolshevism (Leninism and Stalinism) as a political religion charged with a messianic message, can we explain the incredible amount of suffering inflicted for implementing the "promised paradise," and the strength and perseverance in accepting it.

The Communist Party was considered by the believers such an infallible and immortal entity that even an intellect like that of Nikolai Bukharin, put on trial by order of Stalin on fabricated charges, could not help admitting being "politically responsible for the sum total of the crimes committed by the bloc of Rights and Trotskyites." In other words, to preserve the sanctity of the Party, he (falsely) admitted the terrible sin of having introduced a political schism within the holy body of the Communist Party and that he "merited the most severe punishment." (*N. I. Bukharin's Last Plea*, 1938).

By way of the Russian Revolution, "the Communist Party figures as a sort of new Church" (Gustav A. Wetter, 1958), and the Soviet State appears as the new Demiurge. It was then fully consequential that the Bolsheviks wanted to stamp the old Church and any trace of a spiritual God out of people's lives and have them concentrating exclusively on state obedience and the cult of material production. "Matter here appears as a new absolute, a new divinity replacing the transcendent Creator-God, and as such unable to tolerate any other sort of deity by its side." (Gustav A. Wetter, 1958)

In a letter to Gorki (1926) Lenin wrote: "Any religious idea, any idea of God whatever, even the flirting with such ideas, is an unspeakable baseness, the most insidious infection." (Adolf Keller, 1936). For this reason, atheist education should start from a young age. The «Young Pioneer Leader's Handbook» of the Soviet Union stated that "every Pioneer would set up an atheist's corner at home with anti-religious pictures, poems, and sayings, in contrast to the traditional

Russian Christian icon corners.” (Wikipedia, *Young Pioneer Organization of the Soviet Union*).

This attitude can be summed up in a sentence we find in a William James Lecture: “He believes in no-God, and he worships him.” (*The Varieties of Religious Experience*, The Gifford Lectures, 1901-1902).

In other words, atheism was part and parcel of the Soviet Union state secular religion, against the spiritual religion of the Orthodox Church.

The immediate reason for this opposition and contempt for spiritual religion, and so for the Orthodox Church, was the link between that Church and Czarism and her backing of autocracy in exchange for privileges (Adolf Keller, 1936). However, a much stronger and deeper reason was that a new materialistic religion could not triumph without first erasing the old one. To reach this goal, Church properties were expropriated (decrees of October 26, 1917, and of January 23, 1918); monasteries were closed and converted to secular use; priests were tortured, sent to labour camps, imprisoned in mental asylums, or simply executed; believers were continuously harassed; atheism and materialism were propagated in schools and in society at large.

The aim of getting rid of Church and of spiritual religion was present also in another revolution whose final objective was, once again, to put in its place the State and its secular religion. We are referring here to Fascism.

The Fascist Revolution and all the related political revolutions that were inspired by it and went also beyond it, as is the case of National Socialism, have represented the apogee of Statism. In fact, the protagonists of the French Revolution, while setting up the apparatus of the modern state, were mainly animated by the ideal of a civil society; and the leaders of the Russian revolution, while strengthening to the utmost the power of the totalitarian state, were still presenting their final aim of a classless stateless society. Only the Fascist revolution had as its ideal, from beginning to end, the glorification and domination of the State on every aspect of people's life.

The philosopher Giovanni Gentile, in his *Doctrine of Fascism* (1932) stated openly that : “for the fascist, everything is inside the State, and nothing of human or spiritual exists, or even less has value, outside the State.”

The ancient formula of Churchism, *extra ecclesiam, nulla salus* (outside the Church there is no salvation) has been preserved by the advocates of totalitarian Statism by simply replacing the Church with the State, the new secular Church. With fascism and national socialism we assist then, in the most evident manner, at the manufacturing of a political secular religion by new secular high priests, Mussolini and Hitler.

In Italy, Mussolini convinced people that he was the man sent by Divine Providence to solve all the problems affecting the Italian nation. A French professor visiting Bologna for a scientific congress was amazed at discovering that “the city’s walls were completely covered with posters” with the words: “Dio ce l’ha dato; guai a chi lo tocca!” [God sent him (Mussolini) to us; woe to those who attack him!] and that “the picture of il Duce was to be seen in all shop windows.” (Rudolf Rocker, 1937)

In Hitler’s Germany, symbols and ceremonies were servilely copied from spiritual religion with a stroke of further mysticism. The result, remarked by a journalist even some time before Hitler’s accession to power, was that “as to the degree of veneration, Hitler leaves the Pope far behind.” (Rudolf Rocker, 1937).

Hitler copied even church architecture. “Hitler’s town’s hall, which he designed often, took the shape of churches whose towers had to be taller than those of all the churches in town.” (George L. Mosse, 1975).

The difference between Russian “socialism” and German “national socialism” with respect to the Church and spiritual religion was poignantly characterized by a British journalist towards the end of the thirties: “Lenin would destroy the altar or at least promote its decay. Hitler would preserve the altar while replacing the Cross of Christ by the Swastika.” (F. A. Voigt, 1938)

The strategy to set up the new secular religion was quite similar

for Italian fascism and German national socialism. In both cases we find the following tactical steps:

- Accommodation. In the first phase, the new regimes tried to prepare the accession to power by mollifying their anti-clerical stances (fascism) or even presenting themselves as promoters of Christianity (national socialism). And they were ready to compromise in exchange for the support of catholic parties (or some sections of them) and of important figures (e.g. Fritz von Papen in Germany).

- Conciliation. In a second phase, the Church has been enticed into the stipulation of Concordats (Italy, 1929; Germany, 1933) that attempted to confine the Church to an exclusively spiritual role, leaving the monopoly of political action to the party in power (dissolution of the catholic *Partito Popolare* in Italy, November 1926 ; dissolution of the catholic *Centre Party* in Germany, July 1933).

- Suppression. Finally, once the regime was firmly installed in power and realized that some spiritual feeling was still present in large strata of the population, it decided to suppress catholic organizations as it happened in Italy with the dissolution of the *Azione Cattolica* in May 1931 and in Germany with the suppression of the Catholic Youth in April 1934, followed by the assassination of prominent Catholic German figures during the months of June-July 1934 (like the head of Catholic Action, the director of the Catholic Youth Sports Association, and the editor of Munich's Catholic weekly).

With Fascism and National Socialism intent on installing the State as the new Church, we witness the total incompatibility not only between (dominant) Statism and (defunct) Churchism but also between Statism and any other possible leanings, spiritual and civil. In two encyclical documents (*Non abbiamo bisogno*, 1931; *Mit brennender Sorge*, 1937) Pope Pius XI raised his voice strongly, but within the limits imposed by a condition of impotence and in the knowledge that it could provoke further repressions against Catholics.

With reference to Fascism he condemned the intent

"to monopolize completely the young, from the tenderest years up to manhood and womanhood, for the exclusive advantage of a party

and of a regime based on an ideology which clearly resolves itself into a true, a real pagan worship of the State - the Statolatry". (Pius XI, 1931).

The term *Statolatry*, had already been used in the past in a booklet published in Paris in 1848 in which the author, the abbé Antoine Martinet, denounced the mire of all politicians condensed in the formula: "Omnipotence de l'État." [Omnipotence of the State] and exposed

"le cult de l'État, divinité abstraite, aussi insaisissable dans son essence qu'insatiable dans ses appétits." [the cult of the State, abstract divinity, so imperceptible in her essence as insatiable in her hunger] (Antoine Martinet, 1848)

As for National Socialism, the Pope had to be even more cautious given the fact that it was a much more repressive and fanatical regime. Nevertheless he could not abstain from denouncing "whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State, or a particular form of State, or the depositories of power" and "whoever raises these notions above their standard value and divinizes them to an idolatrous level." And reiterated the message that there is not a National God or a National Religion (reference to the attempt of setting up a German National Church subservient to the regime) because the message of God is universal, "independent of time, space, country or race" and takes the form of a natural law. And "human laws in flagrant contradiction with the natural law are vitiated with a taint which no force, no power can mend." (Pius XI, 1937).

However, persecutions continued and intensified, and not only against the Jews who were the main target of them. By 1940, dedicated clergy barracks had been established by the Nazis at Dachau Concentration Camp. Of a total of 2,720 clergy recorded as imprisoned at Dachau, the overwhelming majority, some 2,579 (or 94 %) were Catholic. (Wikipedia, *Persecution of the Catholic Church in Germany*).

With the totalitarian regimes of the first half of the 20th century

we reach the final stage of the continuous expansion of the sphere of state intervention, from the starting point of the French Revolution and through the impulse given to it especially by the First World War. We are now at the apex of State dominance and of Statism as state ideology.

It is now useful to recapitulate briefly what were the strong points (pillars) and the tragic shortcomings (poisons) of Churchism and Statism to see how we might progress past them and past any monopolistic totalitarian power.

### **The pillars and poisons of Churchism**

The establishment of a Church like the Catholic Church and her coming to dominance, in the Western world, for many centuries, were due to aspects that are deeply attractive to many people, be they quite simple or highly cultivated individuals.

These aspects can be qualified and listed as:

- Universalism. In a letter to Christians in Smyrna written in 107 by Ignatius of Antioch, we had probably the first use of the term Catholic, that means: for - towards (*kata*) the whole (*holos*). The Catholic Church is for everybody, and her message is universal, i.e. addressed to all.
- Communitarianism. The Church grew by spreading her message based on unity and charity and by setting up communities whose members were trying to base their life on the practice of love.
- Philanthropism. Reciprocal love found expression in reciprocal assistance within the community and in charitable actions towards everybody in need.

A noble message and a living testimony of that message had the power to attract a growing number of people towards the first Christian communities.

So, in the course of time, based on those theoretical and practical pillars, a universal Church came into existence.

The reasons for its penetration in different societies and permanence throughout the ages were due also to two very important components:

- (a) Cultural Superiority
- (b) Practical Suppleness.

(a) Cultural Superiority

It is an unquestionable fact that, for many centuries, the Church attracted the most cultivated and energetic individuals and was the organization that was most capable of promoting the cultivation and expansion of individual personalities. For this reason, the secular powers had to rely on the advice and assistance of clerical staff for running temporal affairs.

The expansion of mental and material horizons, after the fall of the Roman Empire, was the work of many individuals that, animated by a spiritual fire, congregated and erected monasteries and abbeys. They, not only acted for the preservation of the literature of ancient civilizations (Greek, Latin), but also established the basis for a new civilization.

The Church, through deacons, canons, priests, abbots, bishops, and the faithful, promoted various spheres of theoretical and practical activity, that were signs of her cultural superiority over many centuries:

- Science. The idea of a rational God that created the world to his image and according to the rules of rationality, was a powerful motive for the search for God in this world and, by consequence, for the development of scientific inquiry. In his Lowell Lectures (1925), Alfred Whitehead, after asking himself where the scientific frame of mind came from, suggested that "it must come from the medieval insistence on the rationality of God, conceived as with the personal energy of Jehovah and with the rationality of a Greek philosopher." This is the mental attitude that led Isaac Newton to produce his *Principia* and



that animated so many scientists, from the astronomer Copernicus (1473-1543), a canon, through Gregor Mendel (1822-1884) an Augustinian friar who is credited as the founder of modern genetics, to Father Roger Boscovich (1711-1787) a polymath Jesuit who was defined by Harold Hartley, a 20th century fellow of Royal Society, "one of the great intellectual figures of all ages." (Thomas E. Woods jr., 2005).

- Technology. The medieval monasteries, promoted by churchmen all over Europe, were not only centres for the preservation and transmission of culture, but also for material production, re-introducing technological devices that had passed into oblivion (like the water-mill). At its height, the Benedictine order could boast 37,000 monasteries (Thomas E. Woods jr., 2005) and "we owe it to St. Benedict that the monasteries were the homes of practical agriculturists, as well of saints and of artists and men of learning." (Alfred North Whitehead, 1925). The Benedictines were highly keen on and had respect for the exercise of manual labour and were in the forefront in reclaiming new land for agriculture. Agricultural work and the love of experimentation led the Benedictine monk Dom Perignon, of the Abbey of Saint-Pierre d'Hautvillers, to make important contributions to the methods of production of champagne wine. The Cistercian order, that emerged from a group of Benedictines of the village of Cistercium (Citeaux in French), was also innovative in developing techniques of hydraulic engineering and metallurgy.

- Philosophy. Philosophy was highly considered and practiced by many churchmen. Amongst them we have Robert Grosseteste and his disciple Roger Bacon (Franciscan), Albertus Magnus (Dominican), Thomas Aquinas (Dominican), William of Ockham (Franciscan) and the humanist Desiderius Erasmus. Some Universities in Europe (e.g. Paris) sprung from cathedral and monastery schools dedicated to the training of the clergy as promoted by Pope Gregory VII. In some other cases the clergy played a substantial role, for instance at Oxford, where, from the mid-13th century, the members of many religious orders (Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites, Augustinians) opened halls for students.

- Law. The Catholic Church, through the voices of some of her

members, was instrumental in making natural law the basis of any human produced law, i.e. “to derive from that part of eternal law which is natural law the foundations of a rational system of positive law.” (Harold J. Berman, 1959). In Latin-America the Dominican friar Antonio de Montesinos (circa 1475-1540), followed by another Dominican friar, Bartolomé de las Casas (1474 or 1484-1566), vigorously condemned the abuses of the Spanish conquistadores against native people. The Dominican Francisco de Vitoria, and other fellow theologians “defended the doctrine that all men are equally free; on the basis of natural liberty, they proclaimed their [the human beings] right to life, to culture, and to property.” (in Thomas E. Woods jr., 2005). On the whole, we can credit the Church message with stressing the value of the individual human being (the persona) against the encroachment by any overall power. This aspect was considered so important that some theologians (Thomas Aquinas, Francisco Suarez, Juan de Mariana) declared that it was legitimate to rebel against rulers who were not abiding by natural law, also justifying their ousting and suppression.

- Economy. Many churchmen appear as setting the foundations of early economic thinking. Joseph Schumpeter, in his *History of Economic Analysis* (1954) referred to St. Antonine, Archbishop of Florence (1389-1459) as “perhaps the first man to whom it is possible to ascribe a comprehensive vision of the economic process in all its major aspects.” (Joseph Schumpeter, 1954). And concerning the late Scholastics of the XVI century (like the Jesuit Luis Molina), Schumpeter wrote that “it is within their systems of moral theology and law that economics gained definite if not separate existence, and it is they who came nearer than does any other group to having been the ‘founders’ of scientific economics.” In a later period, we have only to mention the names of the Abbé de Condillac (1715-1780) and the Abbé Ferdinando Galiani (1728-1787) to show the importance of churchmen in the development of economic science.

- Art and Architecture. The field in which the Church played a quite magnificent and visible role in society was the promotion of arts and artists. Christian art started with frescoes in the Catacombs of Rome,

at the time when Christians were persecuted, and continued with the erection of basilicas, statues and all the ornaments that went with the architectural works. All over Europe the Cistercians excelled as builders of abbeys. In France, cathedrals were built that were pushing verticality to new height, suggesting a physical ascension towards God. But the most splendid period was that of the so-called Renaissance, where painters, sculptors, architects were at the service of the Church to embellish towns and places of cult. This is the period when Brunelleschi (1377-1466) built the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore at Florence and Michelangelo (1475-1564) painted the Sistina Chapel at Rome.

(b) Practical Suppleness

To last so long and to dominate so many areas of life, the Church had to possess, besides a superior (spiritual and cultural) authority, also an incredible flexibility and adaptability to current circumstances. This practical suppleness contributed to her survival but was also the main cause for her fall from grace.

In fact, when moral authority was not sufficient to protect the Church from the assaults of secular powers, a survival strategy was implemented, according to times and situations. This strategy contemplated various possibilities:

- Finding an imperial protector: this happened, with ups and downs, during the long initial phase of Churchism, when the Church, from being persecuted, found herself under the protection of the Roman Emperors. Afterwards, the Carolingian dynasty (Charlemagne) and the medieval Holy Roman Emperors were the protectors of the Church, in a situation in which clergy and laity were variously intermixed.

- Becoming a territorial power: this was the situation of the Church during the Renaissance, when the Popes controlled central Italy (Papal States) and started acting as the rulers of a kingdom, with their magnificent court, bestowing favours on relatives (nepotism). The artistic splendour could not dissimulate the corruption or halt the consequent decline and break-up of the Church (Protestant schism).

- Justifying national sovereigns: this stage arrived when national states emerged, and the Popes were asked to approve decisions taken by their rulers or risk a schism (Christopher Hollis, 1949). This was, for instance, the case in the establishment of the Anglican Church and could have been the case for an independent Gallican Church. From that time on the Church was no longer capable to dictate to temporal powers.

- Allying to dynastic rulers: with the arrival and consolidation of national states and the affirmation of secular ideologies (liberalism, socialism, positivism) as a result of the Enlightenment and of industrial and political revolutions, the Church found herself culturally marginalised and socially under attack. In the end, following the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815), the Church hierarchy considered convenient to associate herself with secular rulers, by allying the restored thrones with the shaky altar.

- Accommodating to totalitarian regimes: in the age of nationalistic ideologies and totalitarian regimes, the Church had to sign accords with the state powers in the form of concordats. In other words, just to survive, she had to submit and even appear as to favour them, or risk being forbidden from preaching her message.

The last two stages are identifiable with the European Restoration (1815-1914) and the long European Civil War (1914-1945).

During the period of European Restoration, the Church, with some exceptions, as for instance Pope Leo XIII, responded to the advancement of science and to the aspiration towards social emancipation by uniting with reactionary powers or by condemning progressive movements. An example was the refusal to accept or even to take into consideration currents of ideas like Modernism and Liberal Catholicism. These conceptions, while preserving the core message of Christianity, tried, at the same time, to abandon the obscurantist and obsolete aspects of Church doctrine that were completely out of tune with the progress of times. Lord Acton remarked at that time that the defenders of Catholicism “have induced a suspicion that the Church, in her zeal for the prevention of

error, represses that intellectual freedom which is essential to the progress of truth.” (Lord Acton, 1864)

And another scholar wrote that “the Popes accepted with disastrous readiness the doctrine that every change in itself was a step on the road to Jacobinism and atheism.” (Christopher Hollis, 1949).

The more the Church was under attack by liberals and socialists, the more she responded by attacking everything that smacked of liberalism or socialism. The Church hierarchy put aside even ideas that were and are part and parcel of Catholic doctrine, like those related to the freedom (free will) and equality of all human beings, based on their common human nature. So we have the paradoxical situation of Gregory XVI, one of the most conservative Popes of all times, who wrote an encyclical condemning slavery, while some progressive liberal minds, like Thomas Jefferson in America, supported and practiced it.

Church conservatism and obscurantism of the last centuries was promoted also by figures whose religious spirituality was basically absent. Like the Franc-maçon Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821) who has been qualified as “utterly irreligious at heart” (Christopher Hollis, 1949) and the agnostic Charles Maurras (1868-1952) who was a fervent advocate of a national religion that had nothing to do with a universal Catholic Church.

These have been probably the main reasons why the spiritual authority of the Church has been replaced by the secular dominance of the State.

### **The pillars and poisons of Statism**

The rise and affirmation of the State required the emancipation of that secular entity from the cultural dependency to an organization, like the Church, endowed with more cultivated and attractive ideas. In other words, it was necessary to elaborate a fully autonomous and highly appealing conception, i.e. Statism, for the State to be seen as the new point of reference in the life of individuals and the masses.

This is what thinkers like Marsilius, Machiavelli, Bodin, Hobbes,

and many others did. The development of their ideas in favour of a secular sovereign power developed from the disorder generated by wars: between the partisans of the Pope (Guelphs) and those of the Emperor (Ghibellines); between the rulers of the different principalities in the Italian peninsula; between the partisans of different branches (Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists) of the same Christian religion; between the kings of different states (France, England, Spain).

For this reason, all those thinkers, in different ways and with different stresses, envisaged a strong central power controlling violence and providing security. Especially for Hobbes, the granting of security was the fundamental task of an entity, the Leviathan, to which all had to submit for their personal survival. In absence of that, everybody would remain in "continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." (*Leviathan*, Chapter XIII, 1651)

However, this idea of a strong absolutist power was nothing new and nothing modern. For the effective coming to dominance, theoretically and practically, of the modern State, we should refer to three historical developments that would constitute the pillars of Statism:

- The emergence of nationalism. Nationalism was a spiritual and secular phenomenon. National Churches and national churchmen are found at the basis of Statism, no less than national kings and national heroes. In fact, in France, Cardinal Richelieu and Cardinal Mazarin, did more to establish Statism than many kings and statesmen. As remarked by an historian : "For better or worse, they [Richelieu and Mazarin] acted as midwives to the modern state." (Carl J. Friedrich, 1952). It is, for instance, worth pointing out that the *coup d'État* by Napoleon (18 Brumaire 1799) saw the active involvement of Sieyès, member of the Directory, Fouché, minister of Police, and Talleyrand, minister of Foreign Affairs, all men previously belonging to the clergy (Hans Küng, 1999). At a certain point in time, the national religion of the national State took the place of the universal religion of the catholic Church (see Carlton Hayes, 1926). And this was followed by the imposition of a monopolistic national sover-

eignty which was associated with an identitarian national monoculture.

- The advancement of laicism. In a situation in which the Church had exhausted her cultural superiority and was under attack from many quarters (Protestants, Millenarists, Secularists), the Enlightenment was the spark that lighted a renaissance of the critical spirit and put an end to the Church's cultural hegemony. All the areas in which Churchmen had excelled were subtracted to their influence because, overall, the Church was, no longer, promoter of cultural progress but had become a defender of stagnant obscurantism. And a figure like Voltaire, even if educated in a Jesuit college, became, as a reaction, a formidable critic of the cultural suffocation perpetrated by the Church.

- The arrival of industrialism. The freedom of personal research promoted by the Enlightenment bore fruit with a series of scientific discoveries (in physics, chemistry, mathematics, etc.) that prepared the ways for the introduction of technological devices that, in their turn, made possible the development and spread of the industry. Without industrialisation, and the consequent increasing level of productivity, the modern state, with his huge bureaucratic apparatus intervening (controlling and regulating) in every sector of life, could not have come into existence.

In short, the cultural decline of the Catholic Church, and the later excesses of the Churches (Catholic and Protestant) in their fight for survival and dominance, made the desire for a non-stifling cultural environment inevitable. This aspiration, supported by the invention of the printing press that made the circulation of ideas faster and easier, led, amongst other things, to the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment (with the subsequent ideologies of liberalism and socialism) offered the ideas, and Industrialism offered the means for overpowering the Church and Churchism and for the affirmation of the modern State and Statism.

Statism, at least initially, was a progressive ideology in so far as it succeeded in:

- Overcoming particularism. The remnants of feudalism, with many

local masters imposing their will and exactions on producers (farmers, artisans) and merchants, were abolished when the national ruler annexed very large territories and got rid of many restrictions to internal trade. To provide just one example, "On the Rhine there was one toll-collector to every 10 miles of the river, and on the Loire one to every 5 miles. In 1650 there were 48 tolls on the Elbe." (Herber Heaton, 1937). All this would finally disappear, for instance, in Central Europe with the *Zollverein* (Custom Union) of 1834 that was one of the most important steps towards the formation of a German state and a German nation.

- Promoting egalitarianism. The modern State, born out of the French Revolution, fought against privileges of birth and affirmed the equality of all human beings before the state law, promulgated and administered by the central state. This aspiration to juridical equality was then translated into the advocacy of popular sovereignty resulting in the arrival of representative democracy. The right to vote and to be elected was progressively extended to all adult citizens and became one of the most important causes for the spreading of Statism.

- Advocating cosmopolitanism. The most progressive representatives of the modern state, i.e. the liberals, supported cosmopolitanism and the abolition of barriers to the circulation of people, ideas, goods. This corresponded with the needs of the most advanced economy of the times, the British one, and to a general outlook of progress and friendship amongst people of which a free trade treaty, signed in 1860 between France and the United Kingdom, was a clear sign.

Some of these aspects had already been promoted in previous ages (like the universal brotherhood by the Stoics) or were part of the message of spiritual religion and of the Catholic Church, as for instance the equal worthiness of every human being without distinction of race (e.g., the encyclical *Sicut Dudum*, 1435, of Pope Eugene IV against the enslaving of Black Natives from the Canary Islands).

However, these ideas and principles were upheld by the exponents of progressive Statism, in a more convincing manner, at least from an emotional point of view, and were better propagated through



the formula *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, that became the best condensed and most popular message of the new statist age.

Unfortunately, as soon as the message was formulated and spread all over Europe, already the cracks were appearing in the form of:

- New restrictions. The feudal limitations to trade and industry reappeared, with reference now to a bigger area under the control of the national rulers (macro-feudalism). Each state government, including the United Kingdom in a later period, started reintroducing measures of trade protectionism and industrial dirigisme. In addition, prohibitions of trade unions and repressions of worker's actions were put in place. These measures were demanded mainly by national businessmen who wanted an internal market tailored for their convenience, and a docile working class, obedient to their orders.

- New privileges. The feudal privileges of the past were replaced by updated privileges in the form of licences, patents, quotas, subventions, etc. This was nothing new except for the fact that the privileges were now addressed to the successful commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, allied to the national state rulers, instead of the decadent aristocracy and the backward clergy, both on the way out as recipients of favours from the state power.

- New oppressions. The modern state, born out of wars, the so-called wars of religion, or the wars of independence, kept waging new wars. It did so internally, to impose its own (state) religion against political dissidents, cultural minorities, ideological heretics, etc; and, externally, against weak or non-existent state entities, in Africa and Asia (imperialism), annexing territories and exploiting resources.

In substance, the more the new state power became consolidated, the more its hubris grew, and the state rulers considered it permissible to impose on everybody, within a certain territory, their creed and will. As remarked by a contemporary scholar:

"In the past it was possible for the State to regard many things as matters for God and the Church alone. The new State could recognize no such limitations. Formerly, men lived in groups. A man had

to belong to some groups, and could belong to several at the same time. Now there was to be only one framework for all activity: the nation." (J. L. Talmon, 1952)

In this nationalization of the masses, the political rulers were assisted by the wealthy business community that replaced the Church as the new allies for the promotion and propagation of the new temporal religion.

This secular religion presented almost the same deformations and excesses shown by the spiritual one when it had the same monopolistic power to manipulate and coerce individuals. Only the entities of veneration and oppressions had changed. Veneration was now addressed to three very secular realities to which a sacred-material essence was attributed. They were:

- Man as Super-man. The increase of knowledge in the biological sciences and in the sciences of matter, that took place during the XIX century, led some philosophers, like Ludwig Feuerbach, to extol humankind as the new God, while reducing the human being to simple natural functions. Feuerbach formulated his new conception by operating a series of substitutions: "in place of religion and Church there was now politics; in place of heaven, the earth; in place of praying, working; in place of hell, material misery; in place of Christians, the man." (in Hans Küng, 1978). We were then only a step away from proclaiming that "God is dead" (Friedrich Nietzsche, 1882). The cult of humanity has been the steppingstone for the cult of the masses that would characterize the first half of the 20th century.

- The nation as the supreme community. Humankind was seen to represent a New God. In actual reality, it was made up of individuals reduced to behave as social atoms and then aggregated to form national masses. The essential, if not unique, social unity became the nation, i.e. a mass of individuals supposedly united by material and cultural bonds (territory, language, laws, etc.). When these common bonds were either non-existent or non-univocal, they were invented (e.g. national traditions and commemorations) or reduced to unity by the suppression of the ways of life of the minorities. A national offi-

cial language became the premise for a national official culture and for national laws that would homogenize, discipline, and control the mass of people living within specific territorial borders, fixed and controlled by the nation state.

- The State as the perfect society. Civil societies, reduced by those in power to be composed of individual atoms and national masses, ended up being dominated by an entity called The State. The modern state was the product of the thinking of Rousseau (the imposed "social contract") and Hegel (the imposed "ethical idea"). For the individual it was imperative to conform to the "general will" (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1762) that was supposed to be made operative by the laws of the State, as proclaimed by the drafters of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen : "The law is the expression of the general will." (1789). For this reason "the State has supreme rights against the individual, whose supreme duty is to be member of the State" (Friedrich Hegel, 1821). For Hegel, the State is "absolutely rational" and "it was in the State that freedom of thought and science had their origin" (Friedrich Hegel, 1821). It followed then, for him, that "sacrifice on behalf of ... the State ... is a universal duty." (Friedrich Hegel, 1821). No wonder then that Max Stirner wrote a few years later, with totally sarcastic intention: "In our being together as Nation or State we are only human beings." (Max Stirner, 1845)

All this, in due course, led political leaders, and the masses of individual atoms they manipulated and dominated, to:

- The exaltation of the State. For Hegel "the State is the actuality of the ethical idea" and "it is only as one of its members that the individual himself has objectivity, genuine individuality, and an ethical life." (Friedrich Hegel, 1821) In the first half of the 20th century these theoretical positions will be translated into reality by Benito Mussolini and his Fascist movement. As it has been very clearly expressed in the *Doctrine of Fascism*: "For Fascism the State is an absolute, individuals and groups are relative." (Benito Mussolini, *Enciclopedia Italiana*, 1932). And for the philosopher Giovanni Gentile "Anti-individualistic, the fascist conception is for the State; and is for the individual so far as he coincides with the State, universal thought and

will of the man in his historical existence." (Giovanni Gentile, *Enciclopedia Italiana*, 1932).

- The expansion of the State. In the frame of mind moulded by the philosophy of Hegel, the economist and politician Adolph Wagner formulated in 1893 what would be known as the Wagner's law of the growth of state spending and state sphere of intervention. The State was then presented by some and seen by many as the universal problem solver. No entity in history would interfere and dominate the life of the individuals as the State did in the 20th century. Even when spiritual religion had been dominant, God was supposed to leave to the individual a quite large responsibility for managing his life as in the classic idea of the "free will" and in the popular expression: *God helps those who help themselves*. On the contrary, the state ruler, presenting himself as the last and best of the humanitarians, "wishes to be a prime mover in the lives of others. He cannot admit either the divine or the natural order, by which men have the power to help themselves. The humanitarian puts himself in the place of God." (Isabel Paterson, 1943)

Not everybody was convinced by this statist approach. A thinker like Herbert Spencer openly rejected this "great political superstition" by which the state was installed into full power through the magic trick of replacing the divine right of Kings with the divine right of Parliaments (Herbert Spencer, 1884). Moreover, while the power of the king was never so absolute as pretended and every sovereign was always bound to respect the natural laws given by God to all human beings, the Parliaments could produce their own positive laws and, by doing so, had a much wider and arbitrary power. To the point that, being, as the saying goes, "vox populi, vox Dei" (the voice of the people is the voice of God), the representatives of the people were like the representatives of God on earth and could dictate all sorts of laws.

State absolutism was back in a more pervasive and constrictive way than in the past. As remarked by a modern author:

"A State is absolute in the sense which I have in mind when it claims the right to a monopoly of all the force within the community, to

make war, to make peace, to conscript life, to tax, to establish and disestablish property, to define crime, to punish disobedience, to control education, to supervise the family, to regulate personal habits, and to censor opinions. The modern State claims all of these powers, and, in the matter of theory, there is no real difference in the size of the claim between communists, fascists, and democrats.” (Walter Lippmann, 1929)

Towards the turn of the 19th and during the first decades of the 20th century, and especially after the outbreak of the First World War (“the suicide of civilized Europe” in the words of Pope Benedetto XV), state rulers and state bureaucrats concentrated in their hands such an incredible amount of power that their ideology, Statism, could very well be qualified as Statheism, i.e. the doctrine that preaches and imposes the adoration of the God State.

Max Stirner has synthesized very well this new mental and behavioural attitude of the masses:

“The thought of the State passed into all hearts and awakened enthusiasm; to serve it, this mundane god, became the new divine service and worship. The properly political epoch had dawned. To serve the State or the Nation became the highest ideal, the State's interest the highest interest, State service (for which one does not by any means need to be an official) the highest honour.” (Max Stirner, 1845)

How did we arrive at that? In other words, how was it possible to replace a spiritual religion, albeit tainted, in her implementation, by many failings, with a secular religion that was presented (and imposed) as a new miraculous answer to human predicament?

It can be argued that this happened through the unfolding of a twofold process :

(a) Destroying the temporal wealth and spiritual role of the Church.

(b) Appropriating the temporal wealth and cultural power of the Church.

- (a) Destroying the temporal wealth and spiritual role of the Church

During the 19th century, after the impulse provided by the French Revolution, the theoretical and practical foundations of modern Statism were put in place. However, it was during the 20th century, and especially after the First World War, that the State and its ideology dominated the lives of the people. The consequences of this domination, as previously sketched, were tragic for the Church and for Christianity. The most notorious occurrences, during that century, of the systematic destruction of the temporal wealth and the spiritual role of the Church, were:

- In Germany, the *Kulturkampf* (1871-1891), waged by conservatives and liberals under Bismarck, was designed to obliterate the autonomy of the Roman Catholic Church. "By the end of the 1870s, when the *Kulturkampf* was at its strongest, one half of the Prussian Catholic episcopate were in jail or exile, one quarter of the parishes had no priest, and 1800 parish clergy were incarcerated or out of the country. Nearly half of the monks and nuns had left Prussia, and one third of the monastic houses were closed. Thousands of Catholic laity were tried and jailed for assisting priests to evade the punitive new laws." (Richard J. Helmstadter, 1997).

- In France, the period between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century was characterized by a series of laws that tried to criminalize the activities of the Catholic Church and to put her "hors la loi" [outlaw] (Jean Sévillia, 2006). Under the premiership of Emile Combes, starting from 1902, anticlericalism became, *de facto*, a state doctrine. This led to the closure of almost 3000 catholic schools (summer 1902) and to the interdiction of more than 400 religious congregations (1903). A further 2500 catholic schools would be suppressed during the summer of 1904 and the properties belonging to the congregations that had been sequestered (1904) were then

given to the municipalities (1908). Overall, between 1901 and 1904, 30.000 monks and nuns were forced into exile and 14.000 catholic schools were closed. (Jean Sévillia, 2006). Pope Pius X could do nothing more than raise his voice against this persecution in his encyclical *Une fois encore* (1907).

- In the Soviet Union, the ex-seminarist Joseph Vissarionovitch Djugachvili (admittance 1894 - expulsion 1899), better known under the name of Stalin, continued the destruction of the Orthodox Church, started under Lenin, with the expropriation of Church properties and the strong deprecation of any spiritual feeling and practice. "A decree of May 15, 1932, announced the complete dissolution of all religious doctrines, confessions, religious communities and sects." In the bureaucratic words of the decree "By May 1937 no Church is to be left in the Soviet Union. God will therefore be expelled as a medieval relic from the territory of the U.S.S.R." (Adolf Keller, 1936.)

- In Italy, the doctrine of Fascism as presented by the philosopher Giovanni Gentile, clearly indicated that fascism was a new religion: "Fascism is a religious conception, in which man is viewed in his immanent relationship to a highest law [the Law of the State], with an objective Will [the Will of the State] transcending the particular individual and raising him to conscious membership of a spiritual society [the State as a Spiritual Entity]." (Giovanni Gentile, *Enciclopedia Italiana*, 1932). Therefore the clash between the organizations of the Fascist movement and those of the Catholic Church (like the Azione Cattolica) was inevitable. As for the expropriation of the property of the Church, this had already been undertaken by liberals and radicals after the unification of Italy.

- In Mexico, the Calles Law (June 1926), from the name of the president Plutarco Elías Calles who promoted it, greatly restricted the sphere of action of the clergy. For instance, wearing clerical garb in public (i.e. outside Church buildings) earned the huge fine of 500 pesos (approximately \$250 US at the time); a priest who criticized the government could be imprisoned for five years; no priest could exercise his ministry without a state licence. To further weaken the resistance of the Church to that law, Calles ordered the seizure of Church

property, expelled all foreign priests, and closed monasteries, convents, and religious schools. “An armed revolt of ‘Cristeros’ (Catholic peasants, so called after their rallying cry “Viva Cristo Rey!”) broke out in several provinces ; but it was suppressed with unparalleled brutality.” (Sidney Z. Ehler and John B. Morrall, eds., 1954). In 1929 an accommodation of the question was worked out between the Mexican state rulers and the Catholic Church hierarchy. Following that, as “revenge upon the Catholic ‘freedom fighters’,” “500 [Cristeros] leaders and 5,000 ordinary men [Catholics] were shot, often in their homes in front of their families.” (Brian Van Hove, 1994).

- In Spain, during the Civil War, there was widespread persecution of Catholics. According to the study of the catholic historian Antonio Montero Moreno, the figures, accepted also by other historians, are that 6,832 people belonging to the clergy were killed during the war, of which 4,184 were priests, 2,365 monks and friars, and 283 nuns. (Wikipedia, *Persecución religiosa durante la Guerra Civil Española*). To those figures we must add the assassination of around 10,000 individuals belonging to Catholic associations and the destruction of around 20,000 churches, including some cathedrals together with their historical archives.

- (b) Appropriating the temporal wealth and cultural authority of the Church

To weaken and sideline the Church (or even to suppress her if possible) was the first part of the state strategy. The next step was to appropriate not only her wealth but also her cultural authority in order that a new secular religion could be put in place of the old spiritual one. The imitations, conscious or unconscious, by the state ideologies, of the symbols and forms of the spiritual religion, are striking. Here we can only list some of them without going into much detail. We have, for instance, the following likenesses:

- The poor of the Catholic Church were replaced, in the Western World, by the proletarians; and like the poor needed assistance by the



spiritual clergy, so the proletarians needed guidance by intellectuals and party leaders that assumed the role of a lay clergy. Those leaders inspired a reverence that was paralleled in the past only by highly spiritual figures (see Robert Michels, 1925). They used a vocabulary that was fully reminiscent of a messianic religion, like, for instance, titling a pamphlet advocating violence, the *Revolutionary Catechism* (Sergey Nechayev, 1869). Fascism even instituted the *School of Fascist Mysticism* (1930) with a view to forging the future high priests of the regime (see Wikipedia, *School of Fascist Mysticism*). In the so-called backward regions of the World, the lay priest was the white man (the civil servant, the magistrate, the army official, the developmental economist) with his civilizing mission ("the white man's burden"), that justified every sort of intromission and imposition upon the lives of other people (e.g. territorial annexation, exploitation of resources, introduction of state laws, etc.).

- The lay clergy took the place of the clerical personnel in almost every sphere of social life, in education as in the field of assistance and care. The institution of the welfare state was the way to expropriate not only the Church of an important function carried out for centuries, but also the voluntary communities of any capability and willingness for self-help. Even the father confessor, assisting the human beings with their moral problems of sins and guilt, was replaced by the psychoanalyst and the psychologist. The confessional, in which the person does not see the face of the confessor, was replaced by the psychoanalyst couch, where the patient closes his eyes and opens his soul to the new priest.

- The crusades of the past that were initiated by the Church but were then enthusiastically carried out by secular rulers, were now continued by the state on its own, with even more vigour and brutality. The 20th century has been a century of ideological crusades (communism, fascism) promoted and conducted by the states for imposing their brand of totalitarian ideology. Recent crusades have been organized to propagate the dogma of bureaucratic totalitarian democracy and of crony financial capitalism.

- The sale of indulgences has been replaced by the sale of

promises, quite often illusory: the vote (power) in exchange for some financial reward at other people's expense. Or the payment to the state of a certain sum of money for the remittance of some "secular sins". The sins can be real, as in the case of the destruction of natural resources; or established by the state, when the individual has not given to the state rulers a slice of his fortune. In both cases, through the payment of a fine or the disbursing a certain percentage of the sum claimed by the power, the state subject can be forgiven and be absolved.

- The state has even been able to make people believe that the state rulers can perform miracles creating resources out of thin air. For instance, the miracle of the multiplication of bread and fish pales before the printing of extraordinary amounts of money and the growth of the state debt to unparalleled levels. Further miracles are expected to make this wondrous phenomenon continue forever.

- The persecutions of minorities have been totally taken over by the state. As remarked by Aldous Huxley, "from about 1700 to the present day all persecutions in the West have been secular and, one might say, humanistic. For us, Radical Evil has ceased to be something metaphysical and has become political or economic." (Aldous Huxley, 1952). However, even in the far away past, the persecution of minorities, like the burning of so-called witches, was, overall, a phenomenon of mass hysteria, more than a Church-inspired occurrence. For this reason it is quite understandable that it continued under the state as a witch hunt against so-called saboteurs and dissidents (in the Soviet Union under Stalinism) or communists and anarchists (in the USA during McCarthyism).

- The saints and martyrs of the Mother Church have been replaced by heroes and soldiers dying for the Fatherland. Especially after the First World War, monuments and statues celebrating those heroes and their heroic deeds have been erected all over Europe. In Italy there is even a so-called Altar of the Fatherland (1911-1925) which, since 1921, holds the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier lighted with an eternal flame. The similarities with a Church Altar and its

sanctuary lamp always lighted near the tabernacle are too striking to be casual.

- The ceremonies, processions, candles, holy banners, were all forms and symbols taken up by state movements, like fascism and national socialism. "The Nazi substitute for baptism, 'consecrating the name,' was held in a special room in the center of which stood an altar." (George L Mosse, 1975). The mass gatherings were intended to re-create a spiritual atmosphere around the secular leader (the Duce, the Führer). Denis de Rougemont described with these words a political ceremony in national-socialist Germany:

"Je me croyais à un meeting de masses, à quelque manifestation politique. Mais c'est leur culte qu'ils célèbrent ! Et c'est une liturgie qui se déroule, la grande cérémonie sacrale d'une religion dont je ne suis pas, et qui m'écrase et me repousse avec bien plus de puissance même physique, que tous ces corps horriblement tendus." [I believed to be the spectator of a mass-meeting, some political demonstration. But it is their cult they celebrate! And it is a liturgy that takes place, the big holy ceremony of a religion of which I have no part, and which crushes and pushes me away with more force, even physical, than all those bodies horribly stretched." (Denis de Rougemont, 1938).

The original model was revolutionary France where "the old Catholic processions were replaced by processions through the streets of Paris headed by statues of the 'trinity' of revolutionary martyrs, Marat, Chalier and Le Peletier." (Hugh McLeod, 1981).

- The transubstantiation of the bread and the wine into the body and blood of Christ is paralleled by the (pretended) transformation of private individuals and private interests into public (civil) servants and public concerns. And this just because a certain number of people have cast a vote for them. In this respect, it is quite sensible to wonder how it is possible that, by giving considerable power (e.g. the power to tax and spend other people's money) to some people, they will not be a tempted

to abuse their position. If that never occurred, it would be miraculous. However, because this kind of extended miracles concerning human behaviour do not usually happen, we should consider the fact that the amount of credulity demanded by the State from the common person is greater than the faith demanded by the Church to her members. All this became possible because, as pointed out by a legal scholar

“the mythology of our age is not religious but political. And its chief myths seem to be ‘representation’ of the people, on the one hand, and the charismatic pretension of political leaders to be in possession of the truth and to act accordingly, on the other.” (Bruno Leoni, 1961).

- The prayers are also a fixture of the secular religion, starting from the kindergarten, in view of instilling certain habits:

“Händchen falten, Köpfchen senken, still an Adolf Hitler denken.”  
[Join your little hands, bend your little head, think in silence of Adolf Hitler].

But not only the habit to pray is copied from Catholic religion; also the words, like in the plea that circulated among groups of Hitlerite girls and boys:

“Adolf Hitler, du bist unser grosser Führer, Dein Name macht die Feinde erzittern, Dein Drittes Reich komme, Dein Will sei allein Gesetz auf Erden. Lass uns täglich deine Stimme hören, und befehle uns durch deine Führer. Denen wir gehorchen wollen unter Einsatz Unseres eigenen Lebens. Das geloben wir. Heil Hitler.” [Adolf Hitler, you are our great Führer. Thy name makes thy enemies tremble. Thy Third Reich come. Thy will alone be law upon the earth. Let us daily hear thy voice and command us through thy leaders, to whom we will obey even at the forfeit of our lives. We vow thee! Hail Hitler!].

And, before a meal, this was the prayer recited:

“Führer, mein Führer, von Gott mir gegeben, Beschütz und erhalte noch lange mein Leben. Hast Deutschland gerettet aus tiefster Not. Dir danke ich heute mein täglich Brot. Bleib lang noch bei mir, verlass mich nicht. Führer, mein Führer, mein Glaube, mein Licht.”  
 [Führer, my Führer, given to me by God. Protect and preserve my life for long. You saved Germany in time of need. I thank you for my daily bread. Be with me for a long time, do not leave me, Führer, my Führer, my Faith, my Light].

- The Church as *ecclesia* was replaced by the society as State, through a process of secularization of civil society and sacralization of state power (Carlo Lottieri, 2011). The Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have become now the three arms of the state power, the Legislative, the Executive, the Judiciary, all working, to the best of their intention, to generate harmony on earth through the production, implementation, and supervision of laws. The recognition of the existence of natural laws and the slow formation of norms of civilization emerging from human intercourses were gone. Now, the new God, the nation State, creates and dictates his positive laws for all. In fact, "with the rejection of the Church, and of transcendental justice, the State remained the sole source and sanction of morality." (J. L. Talmon, 1952). During the 20th century all the "ethical" norms have been state norms in the form of laws, defending and imposing a certain type of morality. An example of this were the laws against the consumption of spirits, against the assumption of certain substances, against certain sexual intercourses even between consenting adults.

On the whole, the State as Maker and Regulator of everything (laws, roads, schools, hospitals, security, utilities, morality, relations, habits, civilization) was intended to be the sole source and point of reference. Paradoxically, state-oriented intellectuals that, absolutely, do not believe in God creationism, have either manufactured or blindly accepted State creationism. Creationism with reference to the cosmos (supposedly created by a benevolent God) has at least the justification that we really don't know how the universe came about. The Big Bang might be seen just as a secular impersonal variation of

the Great Architect (God the Creator). But state creationism is a dishonest attempt to distort history and to ignore the fact that the state is mainly the appropriator and not the creator of everything. It is only human beings, individually or in communities, that have devised and produced everything in the past and are still devising and producing everything in the present, despite all the difficulties, artfully created, by state rulers. So, what has been and is before everybody's eyes, all throughout the centuries, is not state creationism but individuals and communities (spontaneous) evolutionism.

By successfully copying and replacing the spiritual with the secular, state rulers no longer need a Church as a spiritual entity, justifying and supporting their secular power. So, "the Church as a secular vehicle of deity was superseded by *la patrie* as an instrument for the spreading of the new gospel of the Rights of Man." (Arthur Koestler, 1945).

From the times of the French Revolution, when "three hundred priests officiated at the "altar of the nation" erected on the Champ of Mars (1790), wearing tricolor waistbands over their priestly vestments and calling down God's blessing upon the Revolution" (Wikipedia, *Civil Constitution of the Clergy*), we have now reached the point where the laity can do without the priests of a national Church. And "certainly it is true that during the last few hundred years there has been transferred to government a considerable part of the devotion which once sustained the churches." (Walter Lippmann, 1929). The national rulers have become the High Priests and their religious ideology, based on laicism, patriotism, chauvinism, could stand on its own.

However, it is just when Statism as Statheism has reached its apogee that the need, aspiration, and possibility of going beyond Statism appear. It is then now necessary to conclude this excursus by showing how it was possible, in the past, to go beyond Churchism (and this has regenerated the community of the faithful and their spiritual message) and why it is now appropriate and advisable to go beyond Statism (and how this is likely to regenerate human societies and their civic organizations).

## Beyond Churchism and Statism

It seems intrinsic to the nature of human beings that there exists a desire to bind oneself

- with a superior entity (God or God-like figures)
- with similar entities (other human beings).

That is why spiritual and secular religions (*re-ligo* = binding together) will be always with us. The proclaimed intention, of some people, to abolish religion, has always masked the unconscious or deceptive intent of imposing a different religion.

As a matter of fact, the term religion in its current common meaning (associated to individual spirituality and to the Church rites) is a relatively modern invention, linked to the emergence of the lay state. In ancient Rome, the term "*religio*" was largely indifferent to theological doctrine and was primarily about the customs and traditions that provided the glue for the Roman social order." (S. N. Balagangadhara in William T. Cavanaugh. 2009). In other words, "religion" referred to a complex of ideas and practices on which the association of individuals was based.

Once clarified the fact of the inevitable persistence of religion (spiritual and secular) as providing an answer to fundamental human exigencies, it is necessary to focus on the two main organizations that have structured and administered those needs:

- the Church: the spiritual authority
- the State: the secular power.

To do so we should concentrate on their respective conceptions, i.e. Churchism and Statism, that have provided theoretical systematizations and justifications for their practical dominion.

The aim is to see if the inevitable presence of religion is also necessarily linked to the presence of Churchism and/or Statism. To

do so, we briefly recapitulate some points and facts already presented.

As previously sketched, the Christian religion started amid persecutions, and his major propagator (St. Paul) was originally one of her persecutors. Afterwards, the power of attraction of the Christian conception led the imperial rulers to consider and accept it as a new glue and fresher support for their power. From then on, secular rulers, not having yet elaborated the updated social reasons underpinning their rights to govern, relied on spiritual religion and her earthly organization, the Church, to provide one. And the Church, becoming a recognized reality of this world, accepted the secular power as her protector and defender.

This mutual support, even with inevitable clashes, lasted for centuries because it responded, as already pointed out, to reciprocal exigencies: the Church needed a secular power to shield her and the Empire needed a spiritual power to justify its position.

It must be also added that, over the centuries, spiritual and secular religions have been conceptions and practices that went well beyond their most visible representatives. i.e. the Church and the Empire (later, the State). They found expressions, for instance, in many monastic orders and in groups of Christian devotees, like the *fraticelli* (lesser brothers) that joined Saint Francis in his practice and predication. And in the secular world, we find many urban and rural realities set up by artisans and merchants which would be the protagonists of future developments.

It happened then, that the quite recurrent attritions between Church and Empire made both to appear increasingly undesirable and to become increasingly weak. In due course, a total reshuffling would take place: the Church got divided and the Empire practically disappeared. The States emerged, in the end, as more localized and energetic powers in comparison with the Empire. They had the upper hand also with respect to the Church. This occurred because the Church

- lacked the material might vis-à-vis of the State.
- lost its position of cultural superiority over the State.



The protestant schism and the so-called wars of religion gave to a Church, already affected by a process of moral decadence, a tremendous blow, following which her prestige and influence were seriously shaken.

Historical events could have taken a different path if the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church had been capable of reforming itself instead of persisting in the worst vices of a temporal ruler, whilst pretending to be a spiritual authority. In other words, if the Church high spheres had been willing and capable of expressing tolerance and humanism instead of intolerance and Churchism (absolute monopolistic power).

A strong voice indicating a more appropriate path for the Church was that of Erasmus (1466-1536). He was a champion of free will and a strong advocate of what will be called religious tolerance. Unfortunately, the direction taken by the protagonists of that historical phase was, on the one hand to try to save Churchism by relying on the Emperor (the House of Habsburg); and, on the other, to sow the seeds of Statism through the Protestant Reformation that entrusted to the secular princes the survival and development of the reformed Church.

From now on, the Pope was often at the mercy of powerful temporal rulers. To refer only to a case, the temporal rulers of many supposedly Catholic countries (Brazil, Portugal, France, Spain) succeeded in expelling the Jesuits (1750-1773) and even forced the Pope (Clement XIV) to suppress (1773) the Company of Jesus seen as a centre of cultural and economic power and influence and so an undesirable competitor to them. "Every work of the Jesuits — their vast missions, their noble colleges, their churches — all is taken from them or destroyed. They are banished, and their order suppressed, with harsh and denunciatory words even from the Pope." (Catholic Encyclopedia, *The Suppression of the Jesuits*).

After the Protestant schism, spiritual religion was to be, increasingly, used by secular rulers only as a pretext for wars of state supremacy.

As it has already been pointed out "much of the wars of religion

involved Catholics killing Catholics, Lutherans killing Lutherans, and Catholic-Protestant collaboration. To cite only one example: Cardinal Richelieu and Catholic France intervened in the Thirty Years' War on the side of Lutheran Sweden, and the last half of the Thirty Years' War was essentially a battle between the Habsburgs and the Bourbons, the two great Catholic dynasties of Europe.” (William T. Cavanaugh, 2009). So, to call them “wars of religions,” in the sense of originating from sharp differences in spiritual religion, is a misnomer, to say the least.

The authority of the Church, broken by the protestant schism and by the repulsion following the devastations of the so-called “wars of religion,” received a further battering when the Church, to save what was left of her power, put herself in a defensive position, by opposing everything that was new and modern.

So that, when the Restoration came, after the excesses of the French Revolution and of the Napoleonic wars, the ecclesiastical hierarchies were convinced that, by siding with the reactionary monarchies of Europe, under the diplomatic supervision of count Metternich, they could restore the ancient power and prestige of the Church.

In actual fact, its opposition or detachment with respect to new ideas and new phenomena, sanctioned a further cultural decline of the Church and, with it, also the definitive end of Churchism.

After Erasmus, several individuals had made the case for greater tolerance (Locke, Voltaire) and the acceptance of progressive ideas. They emerged from outside the Church and were highly critical of the Church. Moreover, the general cultural climate was turning against the Church and spiritual religion, which was felt and made to appear as the source of every atrocity and irrationality. Many sectors linked to the State were actively engaged in promoting a new laic and anti-Catholic outlook. The propaganda against the Catholic Church and against spiritual religion was seen, in fact, as a necessary step for the success of the State and of the ideology of Statism. By way of this propaganda:

- The Catholic Church was portrayed as a sort of criminal organi-

zation, uniquely responsible in history for wars, killings, torture and much more. A famous case is that of the Black Legend through which partisan historians succeeded, amongst other things, in presenting the Spanish Inquisition not as a case, amongst many others, of repression of minorities and expropriation of their riches in favour of the State, but as the Absolute Evil emanating from religion and Church power. A more balanced view should have taken into account the fact that "the inquisition was in every way an instrument of royal policy and remained politically subject to the crown" (Henry Kamen, 1997); and that the number of people condemned to death by the Spanish Inquisition, during over three centuries, amounts, according to some historians, to between 3000 to 6000 individuals. This is much less than the 17.000 citizens condemned to death by the French Revolutionary Tribunals in the space of only two years (1793-1794) and the over 120,000 individuals that were exterminated during the Vendée repression (1793-1796). Clearly, this does not justify the killings perpetrated under the Inquisition that, even if smaller by number, remain, in the words of a Catholic scholar, "completely inexcusable" (Catholic Bridge, *Catholic Inquisition*). However, to qualify those bloody episodes as absolute evil, far worse than anything ever committed in history, seems quite a distortion of reality.

- Spiritual religion was portrayed as the conceptual source and the effective instigator of all violent and intolerant acts. It was equated to an irrational and obscurantist belief; for this reason, all that was bad and heinous was deemed to come out of it. Some obscurantist views held in certain periods of the history of the Church might justify this attitude. However, it is necessary to stress that practically all the violent acts, committed by groups in the course history, are carried out because certain prejudices and hatred are largely shared by the populace at large and not just by one specific institution. This is almost always the case when persecuted minorities are concerned, i.e. those which the local people call deviants or strangers or foreigners. A classic example was represented by the witch-hunt in the past. It is worth noticing, in this respect, that the notorious and infamous text, *Malleus Maleficarum*, against the witches, that circu-

lated all over Europe, was banned by the Church in 1490, three years after publication. This showed that, quite often, the members of the Church have been more enlightened than the mass of the people.

In any case, with the suppression of the temporal power of the Church and the discredit in which fell the ideology justifying her overall dominance, i.e. Churchism, the time was propitious for:

- a recovery of the Church as *ecclesia*, that is as a voluntary community of the faithful.
- a replacement of Churchism with the original universal conception of a spiritual religion freely chosen and professed by the faithful.

So, by the beginning of the XX century, we had already gone beyond Churchism because the tolerance of various spiritual religions was universally accepted and practiced, as a matter of fact, in Europe and in other regions. However, conflicts and wars not only did not go away but even intensified and amplified to a scale never seen in the past. That suggests that Churchism was only part of the problem and that something more and something else must be done.

The second step to be taken is, then, to go also beyond the secular totalitarian religion that the entity that has replaced the Church as absolute power, i.e. the territorial State, has wanted and still wants to impose on everybody.

This secular religion is called Statism.

We have already seen that, from time immemorial, the State has been linked to religion, as remarked by Fustel de Coulanges:

“L’État était étroitement lié à la religion ; il venait d’elle et se confondait avec elle. C’est pour cela que dans la cité primitive toutes les institutions politiques avaient été des institutions religieuses.”

[The State was strictly linked to religion; it came out of her and got mixed with her. It is for this reason that, in the ancient city, all the political institutions were at the origin religious institutions.] (Fustel de Coulanges, 1864)

If we examine carefully mischievous acts committed by or attributed to the Church in the past, we find almost always the State as either initiator, or accomplice or executioner.

For instance, we are all horrified thinking of Giordano Bruno burnt at the stake and of Giulio Cesare Vanini to whom the tongue was cut because he had cursed God, but not many ponder about the fact that Giordano Bruno was handed over to the Roman Inquisition by the very illustrious men of the Most Serene Republic of Venice and that Giulio Cesare Vanini was tortured and burned by order of the Parliament of Toulouse. And we can continue with witches and priests (like Urbain Grandier) burnt at the stake (always by the secular arm) apparently for reasons of spiritual religion until we discover, as usual behind the fact, powerful secular interests that employed popular credulity to dispose of an inconvenient individual.

In other words, the Church on its own was, generally, impotent and did not have the ability to implement any repressive measure.

So, for many centuries, the State, remaining often in the background, has used the Church and has been used by her in what came to be known as the alliance between throne and altar. Later, during the 20th century, the State has played the role of the sole dominant power, having put in place an apparatus composed exclusively of lay people (state bureaucracy) and having elaborated or appropriated cultural conceptions (state liberalism, state socialism) in which spiritual religions and even God could be put aside as tools no longer useful for state control.

We could mark the deployment of the full and exclusive dominance of State and Statism with the outbreak of the First World War.

"Before the war it was almost possible, in the really democratic countries of Europe, for a self-centred individual to ignore the State and live his own life." (Adolf Keller, 1936).

Or, in the words of the historian A.J.P. Taylor:

“Until August 1914 a sensible, law-abiding Englishman could pass through life and hardly notice the existence of the state, beyond the post office and the policeman. He could live where he liked and as he liked. He had no official number or identity card. He could travel abroad or leave his country for ever without a passport or any sort of official permission. He could exchange his money for any other currency without restriction or limit. He could buy goods from any other country in the world on the same terms as he bought goods at home. For that matter, a foreigner could spend his life in this country without permit and without informing the police.” (A. J. P. Taylor, 1965)

Everything changed from that fateful summer of 1914. If it is true to affirm that “the state makes war and the war makes the state” as in the often quoted statement of the historian Charles Tilly (1985), it is appropriate to say that the First World War was THE WAR that finally made THE STATE, as the Father, the Master and the Omnipotent God.

While in the past the state rulers needed to cloak their lust for power and wealth, leading them to war, with the mantle of the defence of spiritual religious principles, in the course of the XX century they have continued to wage wars with reference to other “principles” that have been manufactured and structured in the form of secular religions (the nation, the fatherland, the people, democracy, etc.).

The naïve expectation that, with the end of the dominion of Church and Churchism, violence and obscurantism would disappear, leaving the place to harmonious and rational social relationships, was totally disavowed during the 20th century, the century of “rogue ideologies” (Robert Conquest, 1999) and genocidal plans.

What’s more, everything now seemed permitted under the pretext of realizing heaven on earth, or, at least, that type of paradise that was in the minds of the state rulers. This was made possible also by the fact that now the State could fully disregard the restraints imposed by a spiritual religion that, however badly implemented, and often disre-

garded even by the Church, still assumed the existence of inviolable natural laws.

To make an example, some sectors of the Catholic Church did sometimes accept and even promote the mistreatment of Jews as a retribution for their killing of Jesus, even if Pope Callixtus II issued, around 1120, a general Bull of Protection for the Jews (*Sicut Judaeis*) and “Callixtus’ formulation was repeated by most of the Popes from the 12th to the 15th centuries.” (*Jewish Virtual Library*). But some States expressly approved positive laws for the discrimination and persecution of the Jews and put into action plans for their extermination (the “final solution”). And the same happened with reference to other minorities (religious, ethnic, political).

It is a matter of fact that the secular religions of the XX century (fascism, national-socialism, communism, Maoism, etc.) have carried out persecutions of “heretics” and practiced genocidal massacres at a scale unparalleled by any spiritual religion of the past. The State has been a much more dangerous and murderous agent than the Church because it has succeeded in combining, as the sole totalitarian master, the power of manipulation (mind) with the power of constriction (body).

According to Professor R.J. Rummel, “putting the human cost of war and democide together, Power has killed over 203,000,000 people in this [20th] century.” This figure has been later revised upward to 262 million.” (R. J. Rummel, *Twentieth Century Democide*). Other estimates of the number of people who died in all the wars, massacres, slaughters, and oppressions of the 20th century vary from 167 to 226 million (see: *Necrometrics*). In any case, death-figures much higher than during all the preceding centuries (133 million) (R. J. Rummel, *Pre-Twentieth Century Democide*). This is due not only to the refinement in the instruments for bringing death to the masses, but also to the birth and spread of homicidal ideologies that state rulers have tried to impose on millions of people and that, in their turn, millions of people have tried to impose on minorities and dissidents (those who were thinking differently from the dominating power).

During the period of their full power (the 20th century) state

rulers and state personnel have been not only extremely murderous but also highly obscurantist. They committed heinous crimes against human beings even in the supposedly most advanced regions of the world (see *Unethical human experimentation in the United States*) under the pretext of scientific tests (performed on Jews, blacks, minorities). They impeded the development of science when it collided with their ideological premises (like in the famous Lysenko affair in the Soviet Union). Furthermore, they considered the social organization based on the State the last and definitive form of social organization, and so they have tried and are still trying to stop at all costs any possible alternative that would go beyond the existing territorial sovereignty of the States and their international organizations.

However, territorial States and the ideology of Statism, being human phenomena, like all phenomena, go through a process of birth, ascendancy, decadence, unless there is a continuous regeneration that transforms those phenomena and puts them in tune with the times.

The parabola of Statism can be punctuated by the following dates:

- 1789: fall of the walls of the Bastille, the Parisian prison, and beginning of the French Revolution.
- 1870: fall of the Porta Pia wall in Rome and final suppression of any trace of the temporal power of the Popes.
- 1989: fall of the Berlin wall and shattering of the illusion that the state is a superior entity that can bring heaven on earth.

So, after the end of the Church as temporal power and of Churchism imposed to everybody, it is now time to go beyond the state as territorial power and beyond the ideology of statism imposed on everybody.

This does not mean the end of religions (spiritual or secular) intended as conceptions and practices that bind people together (re-



*ligo*). The affirmation that “religions rule the world” (Giuseppe Mazzini, 1860) is very likely to be correct if applied to the past, the present and the future. Even a very down-to-earth thinker like Herbert Spencer stressed the fact that “a religious system is a normal and essential factor in every evolving society.” (Herbert Spencer, 1896).

However, what we are likely to witness is the end of any entity that presents itself as authorized to impose its will on everybody living in a certain territory and of any ideology that upholds that claim.

The Churches as *ecclesia* (communities) and the States as *status* (organized social conditions) will remain but they will be totally transformed, if that has not already happened (as has been the case for the Church in the Western World).

The transformation of the Church in the last centuries is a very instructive case when considering any future path that should be undertaken.

Whenever the Church acted like a political territorial power or based itself on political territorial premises, the consequences have been disastrous for the human beings involved, materially and morally. This bloody past is very lucidly exposed in this sentence:

"Do you remember the times when people shouted religious opinions more loudly than anyone ever shouted political arguments? When the divine creator became the Lord of Hosts, the avenging and pitiless God in whose name blood flowed in rivers? Men have always tried to take the divine cause into their own hands - to make Him an accomplice of their own bloodthirsty passions.

‘Kill them all! God will recognize His own!’." (Paul-Émile de Puydt, 1860)

And then something happened. After so much killing and shedding of blood, people were almost forced to discover that all of them could live peacefully, side by side, even while professing different faiths.

Again, in the words of de Puydt:

"What has become of such implacable hatreds? The progress of the human spirit has swept them all away, like the wind the dead leaves of autumn. The religions, in whose names were set up stakes and instruments of torture, survive and live together peacefully, under the same laws, eating from the same budget; and if each sect preaches only its own excellence, it is quite rare that it persists in condemning its rivals." (Paul-Émile de Puydt, 1860)

So, what has been accomplished in the sphere of Church religion, after so many murderous wars (like the Thirty Years War) and abominable persecutions (like the one against the Cathars), can very well be accomplished in the sphere of State religion, after the Thirty Years World War (1914-1945) and the innumerable persecutions of minorities and dissidents.

"Then, what has become possible in this obscure, unfathomable region of the conscience, ... could not ... be all the more possible in the purely secular domain of politics?" (Paul-Émile de Puydt, 1860)

However, to make this happen, we should go beyond a mental paradigm and a material practice based on:

- Dichotomism. The conceptions of Churchism in the past and Statism in the present are based on exclusive polarities: We and Them. We, the exponents of the right doctrine (orthodoxy) and them the heretics, the infidels, the dissidents, in one word, all those that must be converted forcibly or crushed without pity, lest they might spread everywhere their evil message and practice. Dichotomism is only the first stage, the theoretical starting point for the promotion of antagonism, i.e. the pointing out and fighting of enemies.

- Antagonism. The philosopher and legal expert Carl Schmitt expressly declared that "the specific mark of politics, to which all the political acts and motivations can be connected, is the discrimination between friends and enemies." (Carl Schmitt, 1932 ). The political antagonism can quite often reach the point when war is deemed absolutely necessary to defend your friends and destroy your

enemies, being war a mere extension of politics. In the words of von Clausewitz: "War is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means." (Carl von Clausewitz, 1918). And if enemies, for whatever reasons, are on the wane, for instance when secular ideologies and politics become less important in the mind and life of the individuals, they can then be manufactured with crafty political expediency.

- Monopolism. The manufacturing of this clashing dualism (dichotomism + antagonism) is possible because of the monopolistic control that the State exerts on all the people living within a certain territory. This monopoly is called territorialism or territorial state sovereignty. As previously pointed out, if in the past we had the formula *nulla salus extra ecclesiam* so that those putting themselves outside or even against the ecclesia were considered almost not human (being Christian the synonym for "human being"), now the formula is "no security outside the state" so that a stateless person (like the Jews in the past) becomes a non-entity and, as a non-entity, can be minced to pieces. Monopolistic state power over a certain territory (territorialism) is for the state rulers the way to control their (pretended) flock and expel, exploit, exterminate, the black sheep or any other living being presented as inferior or infectious.

By going beyond dichotomism, antagonism and monopolism, we go beyond fake ideas and artificial realities full of invented foes, foreigners, heretics, minorities, state borders, and so on and so forth. At that moment, it will be finally possible to overcome the current political mess.

Quoting again de Puydt:

"Under the present conditions a government exists only by the exclusion of all the others, and one party can rule only after smashing its opponents; a majority is always harassed by a minority which is impatient to govern. Under such conditions it is quite inevitable that the parties hate each other and live, if not at war, at least in a state of armed peace. Who is surprised to see that minori-

ties intrigue and agitate, and that governments put down by force any aspiration to a different political form which would be similarly exclusive? So society ends up composed of ambitious resentful men, waiting for vengeance, and ambitious power-sated men, sitting complacently on the edge of a precipice. Erroneous principles never bring about just consequences, and coercion never leads to right or truth.” (Paul-Émile de Puydt, 1860).

Now “imagine that all compulsion ceases; that every adult citizen is, and remains, free to select from among the possible offered governments the one which conforms to his will and satisfies his personal needs; free not only on the day following some bloody revolution, but always, everywhere, free to select, but not to force his choice on others. At that point all disorder comes to an end, all fruitless struggle becomes impossible.” (Paul-Émile de Puydt, 1860).

End of compulsion means freedom and

“real freedom, if it could be brought about, would go a long way towards destroying hatred.” (Bertrand Russell, 1916)

At the beginning of the XXI century, we have the cultural elements and the technological instruments to make this possible. The recognition and realization of the free will against the forced intromission of the Church in the life of individuals in the past, must now be coupled with the recognition and realization of the free choice of membership to voluntary communities by the individuals, against the present oppressive intromission of the territorial State in the life of everyone.

More than a century of totalitarian, invasive, monopolistic, territorial statism is enough.

It is now time to go for personal freedom and to experiment with a variety of many voluntary communities.

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# SUMMING UP

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## Introduction

The essays here presented have been drafted during the years 2003-2014. They are meant to show:

- the conceptual emptiness surrounding, in general, the treatment of these themes, by recurring to all sorts of fallacies (material, logical, psychological) to support very shaky or plainly untrue statements;

- the factual dangers contained in some arguments, not only with respect to the safeguarding and development of personal freedom but also to the satisfaction of basic needs.

In other words, most of the debates on these themes are based on misleading polarities that are likely to push us towards oppressive alternatives.

## Misleading polarities

The current debate on these themes is focused on misleading polarities:

### - Capitalism vs. Anticapitalism

Capitalism and anticapitalism are the poles of a stale, *déjà vu* alternative that survives even when neither of these phenomena seem to have anything to do with current reality, capitalism (free enterprise, free market) being a long-gone historical occurrence, and the anticapitalist front being a bunch (small or large) of nostalgic and romantic manufacturers of dreams or nightmares, depending if their advocated anti-capitalist, state-based panacea has or not become total reality.

### - Globalism vs. Antiglobalism

Globalism and antiglobalism are the terms of a fake opposition that should have never become clashing options. Individuals are rich entities, whose lives and experiences take place at different spatial (global-local) and temporal (past-present-future) levels. The real issue and what is really at stake is the freedom of persons and communities to act, move and shape their lives everywhere as they wish, without



absurd restrictions imposed by rulers of authoritarian organizations (i.e., the nation states).

#### **- Liberalism vs Antiliberalism**

Liberalism and antiliberalism are ideologies that would not exist if individuals minded their own business without trying to impose their ideas and ways of life to the others. As remarked by Oscar Wilde, “Selfishness is not living as one wishes to live. It is asking others to live as one wishes to live.” (*The Soul of Man under Socialism*, 1891). In the end, notwithstanding noble declarations by some classic thinkers, liberals have evolved towards state socialism (a paternalistic state) and antiliberals towards conservatism (an authoritarian state) to shape to their liking the mind and the behaviour of everybody.

#### **- Socialism vs. Antisocialism**

Socialism and antisocialism (or anticommunism) have both led to statism. Since the beginning of the French Revolution, the central aim of all political parties has been to gain state power. All, or almost all, have worked for the strengthening of the state apparatus. For this reason, the socialist-antisocialist opposition is totally illusory, the two stances having pursued and implemented on the whole, albeit with different slogans and stresses, the same policy.

#### **- Anarchism vs. Antianarchism**

Anarchism and antianarchism is the most absurd of the contrapositions because the very essence of anarchy is live and let live, and so no one should be afraid of the other person way of thinking and acting if it doesn't impinge on the other person way of thinking and acting. Unfortunately, both sides have pushed for erasing variety (one of the basic principles of anarchy and of civilized living) and for spreading uniformity (all should be anarchists, none should be anarchist). In so doing, both have resembled each other in theory and practice.

#### **- Terrorism vs. Antiterrorism**

Terrorism and antiterrorism advocates share the same unsavoury zeal to impose on individuals the same totalitarian load of controls and limitations by means of the state. They might differ on which state, which rules and which ruling élite should prevail; but this

constitutes more a formal than a substantial difference. In any case, they all are against the empowerment of individuals and of their autonomous groups and communities.

#### **- Churchism v. Statism**

Churchism vs. statism is the sum of all fake contrapositions. In both cases we have an entity who wants to be the sole to dominate and shape the life of everybody. So, to be for one against the other means to ignore completely their similarities. In doing so we remain prisoners of a stultifying dichotomic image of reality that will keep forever our lives dependent on the decisions of an external power.

If we really want to use the device of positing conflicting polarities, we should at least present them rightly, with real actors and the real arguments.

In that case we would realize that the authentic issues are the classic ones of power and freedom. If we want to represent current realities as polarities, we should focus our analysis on this more appropriate and relevant pair of contrapositions:

- national state vs. cosmopolitan individual
- political force vs. personal freedom.

It is only when we focus on the real issues that we can progress in the theoretical debate and in the practical implementation of solutions. Otherwise, from misleading polarities we are likely to fall into oppressive alternatives.

### **Oppressive alternatives**

All the contrapositions listed above refer to phenomena that are not new. If we have to turn to another historical period where some of these contrapositions appeared, we could refer to the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

At that time, before the outbreak of the First World War, capitalism-liberalism was still shaping society, globalism was pointing to a world without borders and terrorism, apart from some shocking assassination of political figures, was more in the mind of the wealthy

strata, frightened by the advance of the working masses, than a diffuse relevant reality.

We all know how that *belle époque* ended. Firstly, with the start of the world war and then, with the installation of communism in Russia, fascism in Italy, national socialism in Germany, welfarism and dirigism in the U.S.A. (New Deal) and the U.K. (Welfare State).

These were all well intentioned movements, to which many well intentioned people gave their adherence and support.

Communism was against capitalist exploitation, fascism against plutocratic nations, national socialism against unemployment and the sorry state of the German masses, welfarism and dirigisme against poverty and in favour of distributive policies.

If we overlook the final stage of these movements, some of them ending in horror (fascism and national socialism), some in shambles (communism), some barely getting along with debts and disrepute (welfarism and dirigisme), and focus only on their beginning, we notice that all of them, at the start, promised to be the solution to many social problems (unemployment, inflation, despair, etc.) and were accepted, by the large majority of people, as the long awaited solution.

However, not everyone fell into the trap of considering these movements as the way out of a series of problems, and certainly not as the progressive one. This because, from the start, they were all based on giving more and more power to a single organization (the state), to a single ideology (statism), to a single group (the national element expressed by national parties), showing, at different levels and in different forms, rejection, intolerance, violence against cosmopolitan ideas and individuals that were not in tune with national statism.

What all these statist experiences amounted to was the definitive death of capitalism already in decline, the complete degeneration and mystification of socialism, the total end of globalism and the suppression of most protest and dissent, equated in some countries to acts of subversion and sabotage, in one word, terrorism.

What emerged was a regimented world, in which some (too

many) people found themselves perfectly at ease, where obedience was rewarded, and free initiative repressed; where the masses were celebrated, and the individuals castigated. Society was identified with the state, which became the originator, regulator, or director of every social endeavour.

It has then already happened in history that, from misleading polarities, people have fallen into variously oppressive alternatives (fascism, communism, dirigisme), all of them amounting to the state taking over and dominating, in different grades and forms, the lives of individuals.

That was the age of statism.

## **Statism**

Throughout most of the 20th century, statism has dominated, nearly everywhere, individuals and communities, under various forms, from harsh dictatorship to mild representative democracy.

After the Second World War, the major winners (USA and the Soviet Union) have been busy exporting their political statist recipes to the rest of the world.

Despite the differences, sometimes striking, in the way statism has been implemented, with stringent control and repression sometimes replaced by soft manipulation and more gentle pressure, there are nevertheless some aspects that are common to statism in general. These aspects will be now briefly pointed out, attributing to them a name and a parallel intended to make them more easily understandable.

### **- The Kid's approach**

The Kid's approach to life and problem solving has been very well portrayed by Charlie Chaplin in the movie bearing the same name [1921, *The Kid*]. In that film we see the ingenious way of earning a living and gaining a reputation, put into place by the pair Jackie Coogan - Charlie Chaplin. The first (the kid) is a glass breaker, the second (his adoptive father) is a glass fixer. The first acts to prepare the terrain (i.e. to create the problem by breaking the windowpanes)

in order for the second to appear and be welcomed as the providential saviour (to solve the problem by replacing the windowpanes). In the same way, in the course of history, the state with its policies (militarism, imperialism, protectionism, parasitism, etc.) has first created a series of gigantic problems and then has presented itself on the scene as the providential problem-solver, the only one with enough resources to tackle the worrisome/horrific situations it had itself engendered. And this ingenious trick has worked for decades, and, for some/many (naive) people, it is still working nowadays.

#### **- The Murdstone attitude**

The Murdstone attitude is the one employed by David Copperfield's stepfather (Mr. Murdstone) towards the young David [1850, Charles Dickens]. It is an attitude of disdain and discouragement that keeps the other person always insecure and frightened. The aim is to block the development of the person in terms of self-confidence and to keep him/her in a state of permanent dependency, proving at the same time, in front of the entire world, how lazy, unreliable, improvident, devious, the person (each person) fundamentally is. This tactic, that has been also the one practiced by businessmen of the old guard, afraid of workers gaining too much independence and confidence, is the hallmark of statism and can work, effectively, only for statism.

As Elton Mayo's experiments at the Hawthorne factory showed [1945, Elton Mayo], letting personal responsibility, self-esteem, social interactions develop, results in higher productivity and this is what a genuine efficient enterprise should be mainly concerned with (also in view of reducing the length of the working day). On the contrary, in the case of statism, efficiency is not an issue because the state cannot go bankrupt being, at the same time, the owner of the till, the producer of the banknotes and the dispenser of the cash. For this reason, it can carry on surviving even with irresponsible and insecure subjects, and the more so the more it can justify its existence as the indispensable guardian and tutor.

#### **- The Al Capone doctrine**

The Al Capone doctrine is the one contemplating the fact that each territory has a boss and that a certain boss controls a specific

territory. The one who dominates a certain area does not accept interferences (i.e. he exercises total dominion); his power might, nevertheless, be limited by the existence of a super boss that is the chief of all the "clans," and is, usually, the most powerful person in the most powerful clan.

In similar fashion, the world has been divided amongst nation states, with total sovereignty over their territory, sometimes limited by belonging to a specific area of influence that obliges the nation state to follow the instructions or impositions of the super boss (the super power).

These three aspects have represented the pillars of statism and have led, in the past, to a series of disastrous events; it is then necessary to be aware that, going back on the path of statism, from which we seemed progressively distancing, could lead us to repeat past errors and horrors.

### **Past disasters and present perils**

At the beginning of the 20th century individuals and communities were starting to savour the sweet taste of cosmopolitanism, while social scientists were writing about economic internationalism that was "the most substantial guarantee of the development of a general policy of peace." [1906, John Hobson]

Less than ten years after these words were penned, the First World War brought everybody to another reality, and the reality can be summed up in one word: statism. To use a more elaborate circumlocution, from that moment onwards reality appeared to everybody as made up of territorial states at war and filled up with all the restrictions of freedom associated with a state of war.

War was not the novelty. What came, perhaps, as a surprise, was not only the magnitude of the war but the fact that, notwithstanding the multiplication of world exchanges of people (mass migrations), goods (international commerce) and messages (via telegraph, telephone, and later the radio), the territorial nation states, more than

ever, were the dominant powers and, less than ever, had lost their dominant inclination, that is, to wage war.

So, during the second decade of the 20th century, the united forces of militarism, protectionism, parasitism, succeeded in extirpating the seeds of internationalism and cosmopolitanism and engendered a world dominated by the territorial nation states and their obnoxious policies.

The end results were tragic: genocides, wars, concentration camps, degradation of human dignity, alienation and much more.

All this can happen again.

Human beings have some basic traits, common to everybody irrespective of time (inhabitants of ancient Greece or contemporary France) and place (inhabitants of contemporary France or contemporary Japan). For this reason, history is not a mysterious book where indecipherable events and absolute novelties are recorded every day. In fact, the historical process has the habit of repeating itself because human beings are likely to reiterate the same awful mistakes or to imitate the same successful stories.

It has been said that, not only does history repeat itself (Hegel) but also that, what in the first instance comes as tragedy, occurs, the second time round, as farce. [1852, Karl Marx]

At the beginning of the 21st century, the united forces of militarism, protectionism, and parasitism (in one word statism) reappear hidden behind the contemporary mass movements that have put on their banners and have filled their mouths with apparently new but deceitfully old messages: fight against capitalism, fight against globalism, fight against terrorism, all in the name of social justice. If we had just enough acumen and memory to see behind the banners and read between the lines, the real message would resound clear and loud: state and statism, now and forever.

We know already that similar messages, justifying and reinforcing the power of the state, have, in the past, led us to world wars and to innumerable and indescribable sufferings. It is then indispensable to ask ourselves where these, apparently new, messages are likely to

push us. This is what we need to explore, simulating in our mind some possible scenarios.

### **The backward road: super statism**

As already pointed out, it is not by chance that certain movements appear precisely at a certain point in history.

The end of the 20th century has seen:

- the loosening of economic dirigisme in the countries of Western Europe (starting with the U.K.);
- the collapse of communist regimes (i.e. state supremacism) in the countries of Eastern Europe;
- the start of liberalization and consequent growth of some economic realities in Asia (from the Asian tigers to China and, lately, India);
- the abolition of apartheid (South-Africa), the downfall of dictators in many African countries and the first timid steps towards civil rights and freedom of movement and exchange;
- the development, all over the world, of communication technologies that are empowering individuals and communities.

What all this together amounts to is a weakening of the role of the territorial nation state which finds itself in the uncomfortable position of being under attack from the top (international organizations and trans-national citizens) and from the bottom (civic groups and individuals).

It is at this very moment that the anti-capitalism, anti-globalism and anti-terrorism instances appear (or re-appear) with more force on the scene and, quite appropriately, it is in the country that has most to lose from the emergence of a global village: the USA.

The gaining of some decisional power by global organizations (e.g. the World Trade Organization), the appearance on the scene of new global bodies (e.g. the International Criminal Court, for crimes against humanity) and global rules (the Kyoto protocol for the protection of the environment), the new more vigorous demands and actions



for freedom and autonomy by small groups and individuals (in East Timor, in Palestine, in Chechnya, etc.), all these aspects, amongst others, have produced a series of shocks or, to say the least, surprises for big powers used to behaving like bullies, without encountering much opposition (unless it was interfering on another super-power turf). Now, big powers and, first and foremost, the American super-power, might find themselves increasingly reduced to a status like that of everybody else, subjected to fines and reprimands like everybody else (e.g. in August 2002 a 4 billion dollars fine imposed by the WTO on the USA Federal government for subsidies to exporters in violation of international trading rules) without, unbelievable but true, the power of vetoing unpleasant (for them) decisions.

No wonder that the American Federal government and the anti-globalization movement, the latter made up essentially of people from the old clique of domineering states, are dead set against international organizations. Some of them, like the International Monetary Fund, fully deserve scorn for its policies of idiotic austerity recipes (imposed upon society, that is upon individuals) matched by idiotic reckless lending (provided to the state, that is to the ruling élite). But the situation is different, and should be treated differently, when, as in the case of the WTO, the policy is one of trade liberalization.

On the contrary, Seattle (November 1999, demonstration against the liberalization of trade supported by the WTO) has been the place where the USA federal government, with the help of the American press and the assistance of individuals and organizations (e.g. the trade unions) fearful of losing jobs and wealth, masquerading behind the disguise of philanthropic third world supporters, have thrown the first spanner to block this dynamic of freedom (to move, to trade) going out of (their) control.

The positions of the protesters and those of the state rulers are not always identical. Some protesters express a desire for total protectionism and nationalism and long for a way back to those days when the nation state, namely the nation bureaucracy, was in full control,

distributing money (e.g. subsidies) and favours (e.g. jobs) to the nation subjects.

As for the state rulers, some of them realize that the current dynamic (technological, economic, social, ecological, etc.) is too complex to be mastered by a single state. They see that the risk for them is to become insignificant or subordinate to the strongest state or group of states. For this reason, what they are striving for is the establishment of Super states or Blocks of states (European Union, NAFTA, Asean, African Union).

The target, at least in some people's minds, is the formation of super powers, like super fortresses, that vie one against the other, like the previous national states did, but with more clout and more chances to prevail and endure.

This is the Orwellian scenario [1949, George Orwell] that is taking shape right in front of our eyes. This scenario appears progressive, that is more in tune with current evolution, if compared with the nationalist scenario of the most reactionary exponents of the anti-globalization movement.

Nevertheless, the fact is that both these scenarios, the one postulating the nation state and the other promoting the continental super state, are based, at different levels, on the same attitudes of chauvinism, protectionism, illiberalism, in one word, statism.

If we do not act swiftly, it is possible that a strange combination of pseudo socialist, anti-capitalist, anti-globalist and so-called anti-terrorist forces will lead us to a world made of a few Big-Brothers Super-States, keen on manufacturing conflicts (the never ending war of Orwellian memory) taking as pretexts the colour of the skin (black, yellow, white), the religious inclination (catholic, muslim, hindu, etc.) or whatever else might seem slightly convincing to minds previously frightened and frenzied by state propaganda .

Already, under the vision of the clash of civilizations, the quasi inevitability of future conflicts is explained and made acceptable. The super states are already preparing the theoretical and practical ground in order to justify their existence in the 21st century and to rally, once again, their subjects under their banners, pointing to the

usual, and so easiest, signs to distinguish the "enemy": physical appearances (race), moral beliefs (religion), political convictions (ideologies).

If free thinking individuals do not start visibly linking and openly networking in order to speak in favour of the global village, to rebel against the imposition of passports and their condition of cattle in national precincts, to denounce protectionist tariffs that provide cover for parasitic interests; in other words, if individuals do not start exiting, mentally and materially, from statism, the likelihood of a future world made of clashing Super States should not be lightly discounted.

For this reason, in order to avoid the backward road of super statism, we need to present, with theoretical elaborations, and to prepare, with practical actions, the way ahead.

### **The way ahead: beyond statism & super statism**

The way ahead is a (long) journey beyond statism in all its past and (likely) future forms.

One of the main results should be the end of the superimposition of the state upon society and the re-emergence of the true original concept of society, that is an ensemble of communities composed of individuals and their multifarious relationships.

The identification of state with society has led to the idea that society is a reality on its own, an entity different from and superior to the individuals. A further consequence of this identification has been, firstly, the transformation of socialism into statism and, subsequently, the acceptance of statism as socialism. Overall, this conception has bred, in too many cases, personal indifference and irresponsibility (it is not my concern, it is not my job to intervene, society will do it, a new law will sort out things, etc.). To try to mark a distinction with the still currently held idea of society=state, the word society should be explicitly associated with the word community. In any case, whatever the terms employed, both society and community should always be intended only as labels that refer to real human beings and their

relations (e.g. action, communication) and never as entities in themselves.

The first steps beyond statism and super-statism will be a theoretical and practical striving for the:

- de-statization of individuals. Human beings at their birth should not become part of the state, as ascribed members, in the same way as they are part of a family. Family membership is a natural outcome that cannot be chosen; state membership is a personal choice that should be subjected to personal decision, such as joining a club or supporting a project.

- de-nationalization of territory. The territory (earth and seas) does not belong to any nation state but is owned and managed by individuals and groups, for the enjoyment of all human beings of present and future generations.

- de-territorialization of communities. All communities are formed on a voluntary basis that has more to do with cultural beliefs and emotional feelings shared by the members than with physical space of location. Many communities will then be virtual communities, that is, composed by members living far apart in the world but still in close touch with each other.

Once these theoretical and practical steps are well under way, we will have left behind most of the deceitful and delusive ways of thinking, talking, and tackling reality. At that point, the further way ahead will see fully functioning human beings participating and acting in

- open societies/communities
- networked societies/communities
- world societies/communities.

### **The open societies/communities**

Open societies are made of communities in which individuals are not restricted, in any way, in their right to go and live and work anywhere in the world. Moving in, settling down and building up an activity are certainly not criminal or harmful endeavours, to be limited and

controlled, as the rulers of the territorial nation states would lead us into believing. So much, that they have set up detention centres where people, "guilty" of world trespassing, are kept until their fate is decided.

A closed society is, on the contrary, one in which there is an organization with monopolistic powers to fix top-down rules concerning roles, rewards, resources, without much of a thought about freedom or fairness. What is convenient to the clique in power becomes state law, superseding and trashing away any moral principle.

The open society is the one where not only nobody is in control of realities affecting other individuals but also, nobody can ever be in control because the richness (quality, quantity) of the variables of reality (individuals, relations, choices) is so high as to make it practically impossible for anyone (monopolist or oligarchic group) to be in charge of everything and everybody.

Open societies/communities are animated by free flows of individuals, artifacts, messages, within and between, and so are eminently networked societies/communities.

### **The networked societies/communities**

Networked societies are based on communities and individuals seen as small flexible nodes, endowed with many swiftly accessible links. Like the synapses of a brain, individuals in a networked society act and interact, freely, from everywhere to anywhere. And the greater the number of active nodes on the net, the more the likelihood of satisfactory links because the higher the variety of combinations and so the possibilities offered by reality.

In fact, what counts in a vast network is not the size of the node but the quantity/quality of the interconnections. It is this that makes the node powerful. Furthermore, the fluidity to move, the agility to act, the freedom to invent, in short, the flexibility to operate, this is what matters in a networked society in order for everybody to develop and prosper.

A sound human being wants to be free from conventional think-

ing, fast to test new interesting ideas, flexible to respond to new pressing demands.

With reference to communities, free, fast, and flexible are, usually, qualities associated with smallness or with a humanly manageable size. This means that in an open network there is more scope and sense for small appropriate components and small creative units (nodes).

By contrast, the big dinosaurs (state bureaucracies and bureaucratic firms) of the statist era have reached the end of their existence. They will survive in some places where, for one reason or the other, the remnants of the statist period will take longer to disappear.

But, in the long run, as ideas and aspirations cannot be stopped forever by any wall, individuals living in a confined space under the power of the dinosaurs will realize that a better life could be built by breaking the wall.

And so, open networked societies will spread all over the world, so that those who desire so, might be part of world societies/communities.

### **The world societies/communities**

World societies/communities does not mean the existence of one gigantic society with one world government (the World-State) as envisaged by H. G. Wells [1933, H. G. Wells].

The expression world societies refers to the existence of a myriad of communities composed of individuals who, according to their wishes and inclinations, are able to tie up with and tap the entire spectrum of world cultures and world inhabitants. And all with the same extreme easiness, irrespective of physical or mental distance.

Within this outlook and practice, the often-repeated antithesis between local and global should finally appear for what it is: the remnant of a past age and of an obsolete view.

The idea of the world as a global village has been around for quite a while. For instance, it appears as the religious message of universal brotherhood and world ecumene; it is present in the Stoics

concept of a natural law common to all human beings; it is alive in the Kantian ethic of a cosmopolitan society. It has been, more recently, encapsulated in the image of the spaceship earth, in which we are all part of the crew, and we are all responsible for steering it on a good course [1966, Kenneth E. Boulding].

There is no opposition whatsoever between local and global. In fact, these are flimsy concepts derived from a frame of mind based on territorialism (monopolistic territorial sovereignty). Now that close links could very well be established amongst individuals living far apart, the concepts of local and global lose all their relevance and meaning as opposing options.

What is needed are world societies/communities that accept, accommodate and acclaim, at the same time, all the basic traits and tendencies of the human being [1948, Clyde Kluckhohn and Henry A. Murray], that is:

- **Universalization:** we are like everybody else (human-kind)
- **Specification:** we are like some others (group-kind)
- **Personalization:** we are like nobody else i.e., unique (self-kind)

Many harmful and outworn habits of thinking and doing should fade away with the disappearance of the antithesis between local and global. What should survive and spread everywhere, even more vigorously, is the love and care of freedom. Because freedom is, at the same time, not only the indispensable means for any development, but also an end in itself.

## Conclusion

Over 2000 years ago, in ancient Greece, a man called Aesop was recounting his fables to all those who were willing to listen. In those fables he was extolling the virtues of freedom and exposing the vices

of tyrants, and this is why Peisistratus, ruler of Athens and enemy of free speech, had him condemned to death in 560 BC.

One of his stories, in particular, is very apt to portray the life envisaged by those who have assigned to themselves the mission to protect us from any real or presumed exploitation (anti-capitalist movement), risk (anti-globalization movement), fear (anti-terrorism movement), usually in the name of national socialism (i.e. statism) or national welfare (i.e. state interests).

In the apologue of the plump content dog and the hungry vagrant wolf, Aesop portrays two styles of life that could really be applied to the various actors dealt with in the previous essays.

One is the life advocated by the various anti-something movements; it is the life where, so-called human beings are cushioned creatures under the wings of the so-called nanny state: no risks, no pains, no surprises. In other words, the supposedly content life devoid of any meaningful content.

The other is life as an adventure, full of new experiences, exhilarating or dispiriting. In other words, the real life made of competition and cooperation, freedom and responsibility, enthusiasms and care, happiness, and hardship.

And so, when somebody tries to enrol us in their fight for drab protection and dumb security under the heavy mantle of the Big Brother state, even if the promises were for real and not illusory as they have so often been, and even if we were in the most tumultuous and difficult situation, we should reply in the way Aesop would have liked us to do:

"... a dry crust with liberty will always be worth more than all the luxury a king with a chain could ever provide." [4th century B.C., Aesop]



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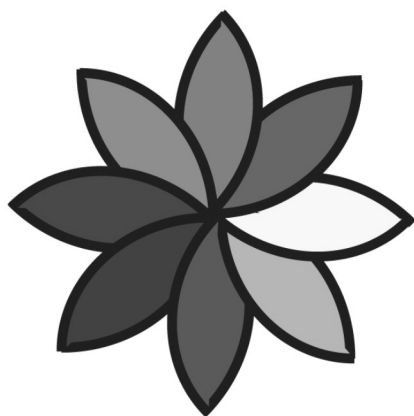
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